

NEW HISTORY OF LONDON

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Welcome to ALL ABOUT **HISTORY** **HISTORY OF** **LONDON**

It's hard to believe that the city of London didn't exist before the Romans arrived some 2,000 years ago. Now one of the most fascinating capital cities in the world, its iconic landmarks and historical buildings have been shaped by the events they've witnessed and people they've housed. Join us on a journey through this incredible city. Explore its royal palaces, and discover what really happened in the Tower of London during the reign of Henry VIII; find out how it recovered after the Great Fire; see how writers such as Dickens and Shakespeare were influenced by the city; and learn all about its cultural events, from the River Thames frost fairs to the 2012 Olympic Games. With in-depth features, stunning images and illustrative maps that bring the city's past to life, this is the ultimate companion for anyone with an interest in London.

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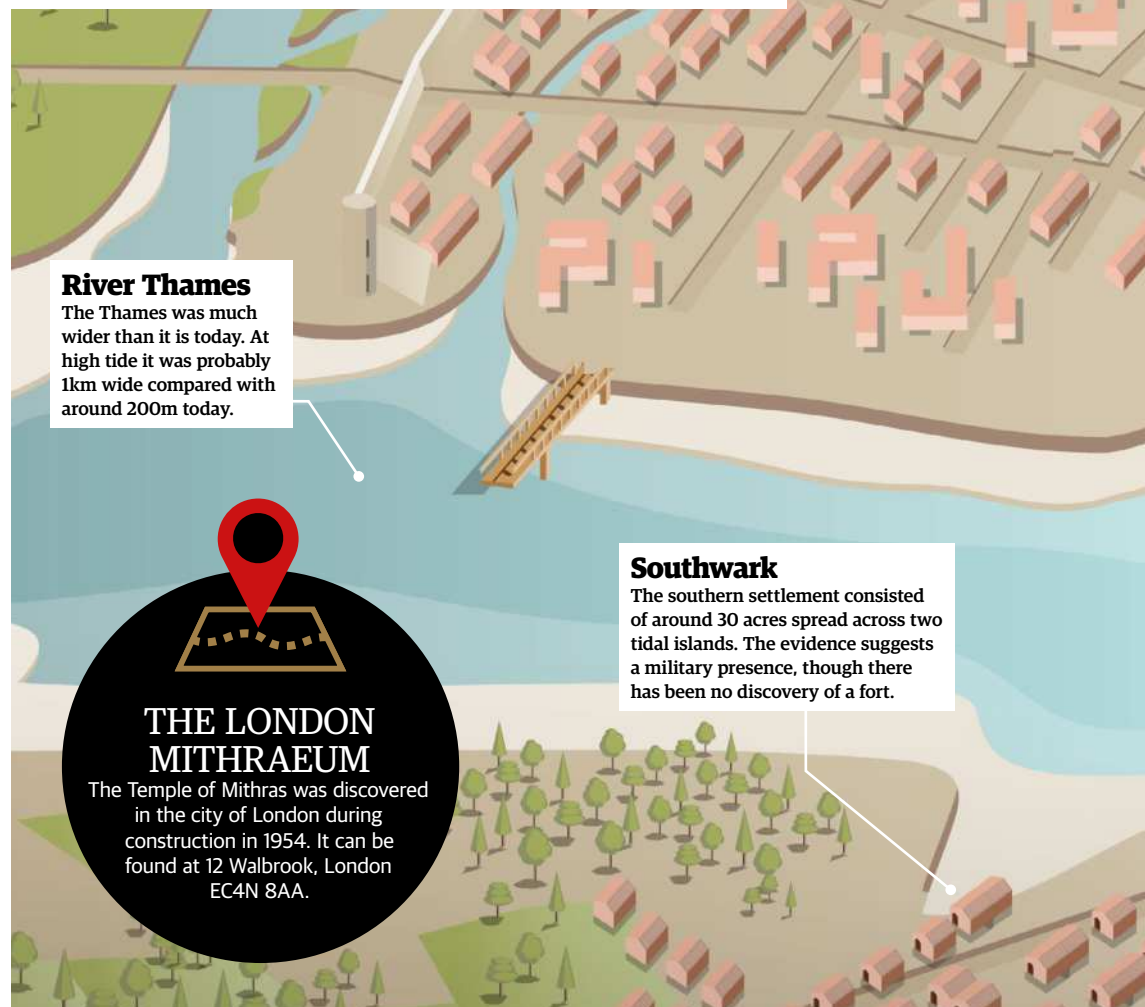
The Romans found Londinium

Roman London sprung up around a crossing across the Thames

Though the Thames Valley was most likely inhabited in prehistoric times, it was the Romans who established the first major urban settlement in the London area. Their connection to the region extends as far back as Julius Caesar's invasion in 55 BCE when the legions subjugated the local tribes around London. It was the second invasion, however, under the emperor Claudius in 43 CE, that the Romans settled the area, recognising the strategic importance of its terrain and the commercial potential of its double-tide estuary.

It is supposed that there was significant military activity during the early urban development between 50-55 CE, and it was perhaps an important supply base. Even at this early stage, the town developed with settlements situated on both sides of the River Thames, which were linked by a wooden bridge.

On the northern side, the settlement was centred on the river frontage, the crossing and two parallel gravel roads running east to west. The first of these, it is said, can be traced in the alignment of Eastcheap and Cannon Street, while the second was around 91 metres further north from the eastern portion of Lombard Street running into Fenchurch Street. The southern settlement was focused on two tidal islands at Southwark. These areas stand as the origins of modern London.



This surviving portion of the original 3rd-century Roman wall is sited near Tower Hill tube station



Londinium takes shape

When writing of the London of 60 CE, the Roman historian Tacitus describes it as "a very important and busy centre for traders," proving that in less than a decade it had blossomed from a military supply base to a bustling and vibrant town. Despite a number of setbacks, London continued to grow throughout the 1st century, and alongside the small dwellings with their clay walls and thatched roofs, stone buildings sprang up, including public baths and temples, a fort and an amphitheatre, while

a racing arena was built just to the south of modern-day St Paul's.

By the end of the 1st century, London was enjoying its most lively period of growth, though its great wall was not built until 100 years later, with historians placing its construction at around 200. Areas within the wall were still used for agriculture and pasture. The first London mint was established in the 3rd century, as was a riverine wall, which completed the city's network of defences.

The Romans found Londinium

Cripplegate Fort

Established in the late 1st century, the Cripplegate Fort was built to house troops detached from their regular units to guard the city's officials.

Roman London c.200 CE

The Romans turned London into a lively commercial centre. Here's how it looked by c.200 CE

Amphitheatre

The erection of prominent public buildings, like the amphitheatre, made London different from most other Romano-British towns.

Temple of Mithras

The Mithraic temple celebrated a mystery cult, which historians suggest was predominantly the reserve of merchants and officials.

Forum and basilica

The construction of a much-enlarged forum and basilica in the 2nd century suggests London's prominence in Roman thinking.

The 'Governor's Palace'

Whether these buildings were indeed a governor's palace remains in dispute, but there were clearly many Roman officials to house.



Modern-day London Bridge is built just a few hundred metres from the original Roman crossing

LONDON BRIDGE

The Roman crossing over the river was a wooden construction that ran around 90 metres east of the first stone-built London Bridge, connecting the north bank between the southern end of Pudding Lane to the south, just west of St Olav's church in Southwark. Its exact position cannot be identified, but historians agree that it would have been an impressive sight, not least to the native inhabitants who were unaccustomed to such feats of engineering. "Half the legends of London arose upon its foundations," writes Peter Ackroyd in his biography of the city. "Miracles were performed and visions seen upon the new wooden thoroughfare."

London Bridge

The first Roman crossing across the Thames was likely a pontoon bridge, which was replaced by a permanent wooden structure.

Blood and fire

From the earliest times, London has been a place of blood and fire. Conflagrations scorched the city throughout Roman times with extensive blazes destroying great swathes during the Flavian, Hadrianic and Antonine periods. The Hadrianic Fire (c.120-125) appears to have been the most potent, and though rebuilding occurred, it was not as dense. The city's destruction

in the revolt of Boudicca (60-61 CE) stemmed its development for several years, and there is a legend of slaughter attributed to the Celtic tribes by medieval chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth, who says the warriors threw the heads of Roman legionaries into a "brook in the city." The discovery of skulls in the bed of the Walbrook River in 1860 has been linked to this story.



Around 20 Roman skulls were unearthed by workers on Liverpool Street Station where the River Walbrook once flowed



Boudicca lays waste to London

The revolt of the Iceni in 60-61 CE visited upon London a grim and grisly fate

The Roman Empire, like many before and after, often witnessed a revitalisation of resistance after a period of pacification, and its experiences in Britain were no different. In 60 CE, the most famous of the Britons' rebellions erupted, the echoes of which are still heard to this day. The revolt broke out in the lands of the Iceni and Trinovantes in modern-day East Anglia, Suffolk and Greater London, with the queen of Iceni, Boudicca, at its head.

Boudicca was the widow of a client king called Prasutagus, and on his passing, the Romans had incorporated the kingdom into the province. Prasutagus had made the emperor, Nero, his

co-heir in a bid to protect his family, but any hope of a smooth transition soon passed as Roman centurions and imperial slaves ran amok, committing many outrages against the royal family. Boudicca was flogged and her daughters raped. Many family members lost their land. Boudicca demanded vengeance, and the towns of Colchester (Camulodunum), St Albans (Verulamium), and London (Londinium) felt her terrible wrath. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, who provides the oldest (though not contemporaneous) account of the rebellion, she inflicted hideous abuses on the Romans and their sympathisers before her defeat.

Boudicca lays waste to London



Boudicca in her war chariot rousing her troops

Her assault on London came in the wake of the razing of Colchester, itself foreshadowed by a series of strange portents, Tacitus says, including a vision emerging in the Thames estuary of the colony in ruins. When the rebellious Britons emerged before London, they were emboldened by their success, having overrun Colchester and ambushed a detachment of legionaries sent to the colony's rescue.

If any witnesses of the Iceni's destruction of Colchester had arrived in London ahead of the rampaging rebels, their tales would have struck fear into people's hearts. The Britons had paid no heed to age or gender, crucifying, hanging and putting to the sword everyone who they found. London would fare no better.

Before the Britons approached, the inhabitants might have been cheered by the arrival of the Roman governor, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, with a cavalry escort, who considered organising a defence of the town. He soon realised, however, that there wasn't time to erect barricades and marshal the defenders, so he decided to withdraw, abandoning London to its agonising fate. "He decided to sacrifice a single town in order to save the whole province," says Tacitus.

A few able-bodied men were invited to join his column, but women, the young and the old were left to be overrun by Boudicca's army. Tacitus describes the event as "slaughter, hangings, fire and crucifixion."

It is the later writer, Cassius Dio, who provides the grimmer detail, perhaps in a bid to titillate his male readership, or perhaps knowing a little more of Celtic religions. He claims that in the groves dedicated to the goddess Andrasta, terrible atrocities were visited upon London's women. "Their breasts were cut off," he writes, "and stuffed into their mouths so that they seemed to be eating them. Then their bodies were skewered lengthwise on sharp stakes."

As to the fate of the captured men, he remains silent on the subject. There are also no definitive accounts on the exact destruction wrought upon the architecture of the place, but it was looted and it seems more than likely that the flames would have swallowed the entire town, which at this stage was built of wood and clay and thatch. St Albans soon followed.

After the third town fell, Suetonius Paulinus met the Britons in battle, and his force - although smaller - was a battle-hardened and professional unit. The Roman victory was total, and the reprisals were harsh, though this proved cold comfort for those who had lost family and friends in Boudicca's bitter rampage.

The state of London in 60 CE

Despite being a new town, founded by the Romans shortly after the Claudian invasion of 43 CE, after just a decade, London had blossomed into a thriving entrepôt brimming with traders and travellers. Its walls were still many years from construction, and there would have been little stone architecture at this embryonic stage. The nucleus of this settlement was centred on either side of the Thames, linked by a Roman bridge, and it already enjoyed a rectilinear street pattern.

The archaeological evidence of Boudicca's destruction is found in a red layer of oxidised iron that lies among a layer of burnt clay, wood and ash. "It is the first token of the city's appetite for human life," writes London's biographer Peter Ackroyd. "Red is London's colour, a sign of fire and devastation."

Legend has it that modern-day King's Cross - once known as Battle Bridge - was the site of the major battle between the Romans and the Iceni. There is no historical evidence of this, although Lewis Spence's 1937 book *Boadicea: Warrior Queen Of The Britons* included a highly fanciful map showing the positions of the two armies. There is also a legend that after the battle, Boudicca was buried in a grave that lies currently between platforms 9 and 10 in King's Cross Station, although again, there is no evidence to support the claim.



This etching of Boudicca's destruction of London is highly anachronistic, as there were no walls to burn

"Women, the young and the old were left to be overrun by Boudicca's army"

Boadicea and her daughters

London's famous statue commemorates the warrior queen

It may seem peculiar that a city that suffered so horribly should commemorate the woman who inflicted the pain. And yet this bronze statue of Boudicca and her two daughters stands proudly on the north side of Westminster Bridge, near Portcullis House and Westminster Pier, opposite Big Ben and the Palace of Westminster. It is considered the defining work of its sculptor, the English artist and engineer Thomas Thornycroft, who worked on it for the 30 years prior to his death in 1885, though it was not set in its current position until 1902. It depicts the warrior

queen standing upright in a flowing gown with a spear in her right hand, and her left hand raised high above her head. Her daughters, who suffered horribly at the hands of the Romans, crouch beside her.

Reflecting the Victorian's fascination with Celtic heroes, it carries their spelling of her name, Boadicea. It also reflects Victorian learning, as the chariot in which she rides sports huge scythed blades on its wheels. However, the literary and archaeological evidence suggests the Celts did not fix blades to their war chariots. The chariot is in fact based on Roman models.



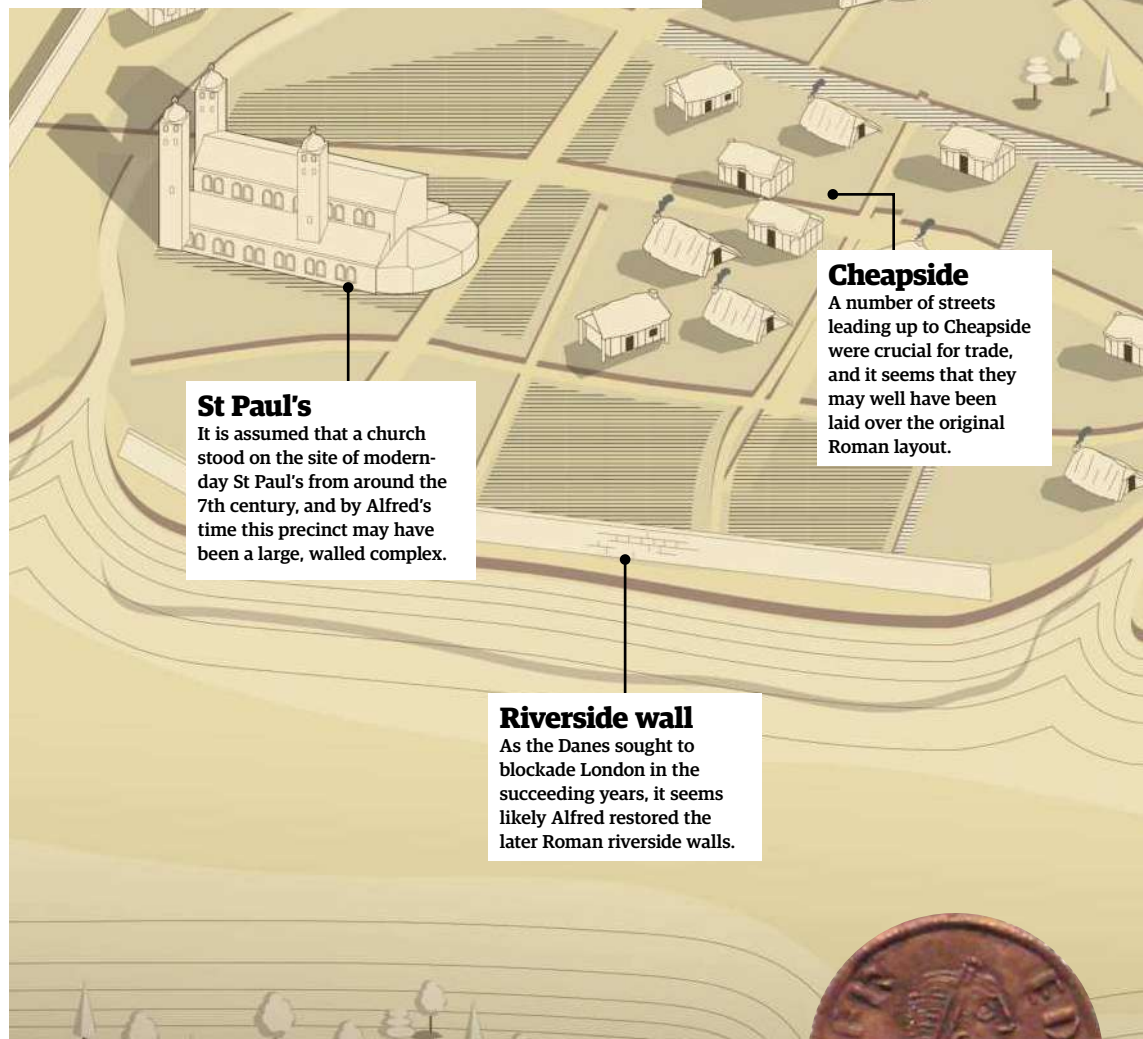
The right side of the plinth contains an inscription with text from William Cowper's poem *Boadicea*, an ode written in 1782: "Regions Caesar never knew, thy posterity shall sway"

Alfred the Great restores London

The Anglo-Saxon king freed the city from the Viking hordes

The Danes wreaked havoc upon England during the 9th century, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in 842, they plundered the south and unleashed "great slaughter in London." They were beaten back but returned in 851. With the Romans long gone, the city walls would likely have been in a state of disrepair. Even if there had been solid defences along the river front, it is unlikely that the citizens could have repelled this major attack. A fleet of 350 ships sailed up the Thames, and London fell to the invaders. At this time the Viking modus operandi was plunder and pillage, and London once more felt the lick of flames.

In 867, the Vikings returned to these shores yet again, and in 872 established a base in London to exert control over the south. Many of the richest inhabitants fled. Here the Danes remained, possibly in an uneasy alliance with the English, until in 883 the client king of Wessex, Alfred, engaged in a siege, having mustered an army outside the city. By 886 Alfred had retaken the city entirely, and his dominion spread from London; it was from here, the *Chronicle* announces, that all the English people who were not living under Danish rule submitted to him. Alfred set about restoring London, rebuilding its streets and fortifications, thereby encouraging its citizens to return.



St Paul's

It is assumed that a church stood on the site of modern-day St Paul's from around the 7th century, and by Alfred's time this precinct may have been a large, walled complex.

Cheapside

A number of streets leading up to Cheapside were crucial for trade, and it seems that they may well have been laid over the original Roman layout.

Riverside wall

As the Danes sought to blockade London in the succeeding years, it seems likely Alfred restored the later Roman riverside walls.

STATUE OF ALFRED THE GREAT

This statue of Alfred, the restorer of London, stands outside the church in Trinity Square in Newington, in the borough of Southwark. Its exact origins still remain a source of debate.

Lundenburh

It was during Alfred's time that burhs (or boroughs) were established as centres for commerce, trade and defence, and commentators note that Alfred may have looked to the walled Roman city of London as the place to establish a burh. Though the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* cites 886 as the key year, it is likely he developed London over a period of years up to and after this iconic date.

It should come as no surprise that Alfred's system of rebuilding, restoring the Roman walls and digging the

defensive ditches, should have been focused on the old Roman site. His restoration of 'Lundenburh' included work on the quays and the key streets around them, and it is at this point that the activities of 'Lundenwic', a few miles upriver to the west, were brought within the city walls. Hence Lundenwic passed into history as Aldwych (translating as 'old market town'), a name that endures to this day.



Alfred the Great restores London

Alfred the Great's Lundenburh

A look at what Alfred's restored London might have looked like when his rebuilding was finally complete

Restored Roman walls

It is almost certain that the old Roman walls were in a state of disrepair. These Alfred restored.

Churches

The granting land or 'sokes' to lords and bishops saw a number of wooden and limestone churches spring up in Alfred's London.

Amphitheatre

Though the Anglo-Saxons would at no stage have fully restored the old Roman amphitheatre, it is said that the remaining structure was used as a meeting place.

London Bridge

That the bridge formed part of Alfred's London is suggested by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recording its destruction in the following century.

Quays

The Hithes, or docks, such as Queenhithe (at the time named after Alfred's son, Ethelred), Garlickhythe and St Botolphs were vital for London's position as a trading centre.

THE ALFRED PLAQUE

This plaque was erected in 1956 to mark the eleven hundredth anniversary of King Alfred's re-establishment of the Roman city of London in 886, after the abandonment of the Saxon walled city which had existed for some three centuries in the Strand area to the west of the City. At this place a harbour and market were established by 886 to restore trade after the Viking invasions.

A CITY OF WAR

The exact details of Alfred's restoration are recorded by neither literary nor archaeological evidence, but the effectiveness of the rebuilt defences are suggested by London's ability to withstand Viking attacks in the succeeding years. Indeed, the *Chronicle* records that the citizens were so emboldened that they even marched out to meet their marauding enemies in 893 and again in 895, on the latter occasion even going so far as to plunder the Viking ships. In 994, the Danes sent almost 100 ships to blockade the city, but were again repelled. London now had its own army, and demonstrated the characteristics of a kingdom in and of itself. This position it maintained for many years to come.



King Cnut (from a 14th-century manuscript) placed a heavy burden on London once he became king

The Danes retake London

The Danes once more took London. In 1013, Sweyn Forkbeard launched an invasion and, after a long siege, eventually defeated the English citizens. He fled not long after that, but then returned in alliance with Olaf, the Norwegian, who was responsible for an ignoble moment in London's history. Tying his ships to the supports of London Bridge, he used the

tide to pull them from position, sending the structure tumbling into the river.

There was a long-running battle for London, and when Sweyn's son, Cnut, eventually became king, he ended up taxing London rather heavily. The Danes eventually settled outside the Roman walls on the site that is marked today by the church of St Clement Danes.

Westminster Abbey: Guardian of history

For nearly a millennium, Westminster Abbey has witnessed, memorialised and enshrined many of the most significant people and events in British history

The embodiment of the life and spirit of the British people can be found residing in Westminster Abbey; a sanctified place in the history of the nation where more than 3,300 royals, heroes and luminaries of the arts and sciences are either buried or memorialised, where monarchs have been crowned and the vows of marriage exchanged in grandeur, spectacle and solemnity.

From humble beginnings, the abbey, officially the Collegiate Church of St Peter at Westminster, is today revered in life and legend. With the passage of time, its origins have become somewhat shrouded in theory and conjecture, but it is believed that a place of worship may have existed on the site since Roman times, when a temple to Apollo was raised near the River Thames to the west of the city of London. The land was originally known as Thorney Island, and it is said that a young fisherman experienced a vision of St Peter there. Some historians assert that a Saxon ruler named Sebert built the first Christian structure on the site in the late 6th or early 7th century, and sometime around 960, King Edgar and St Dunstan founded a Benedictine abbey at Thorney Island.

King Edward the Confessor, later canonised as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church, contributed to the timeless journey of Westminster Abbey

after vowing to make a pilgrimage to Rome in the mid-11th century. When Edward was advised that the state of the kingdom was too fragile for him to depart, the pope discharged him from the obligation. Edward chose instead to enlarge the existing abbey, raising a church in honour of St Peter, which came to be known as the West Minster, or West Church, to distinguish it from

St Paul's Cathedral, the East Minster. The new stone edifice was consecrated on 28

December 1065, only a week before Edward's death. Edward the

Confessor was entombed in front of the high altar in Westminster Abbey; however, his body was moved several times through the years, finally resting within a spectacular shrine considered to be the focal point of the present structure.

King Henry III revered Edward the Confessor, and more than two

centuries after Edward's death, Henry embarked on an ambitious building programme that resulted in the Gothic structure that exists today. In 1245, as a wave of spectacular cathedral building swept Western Europe, Henry began building an attachment to Edward's structure. Much of the earlier abbey was eventually razed, and few remnants remain, primarily underground arches and support columns and chambers that served as living quarters for its Benedictine monks. Henry's new abbey was

Westminster Abbey contains wax effigies of key figures, such as Vice Admiral Nelson, dressed in clothing that belonged to them.



Westminster Abbey: Guardian of history





This image from *The Bayeux Tapestry* depicts the abbey at Edward the Confessor's funeral

Oliver Cromwell in death

The lord protector of England was buried at Westminster Abbey, but his time there was short

Born into a wealthy and influential family in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, in 1599, Oliver Cromwell rose to prominence as the leader of parliamentary forces, opposed to those of the crown, during the English Civil War. Cromwell was a fiery Puritan, vehemently opposed to the rule and order of the episcopal authority of the Church of England as well. Following an extended period of unrest and the parliamentary victory during the English Civil War, Cromwell became lord protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland. During Cromwell's concentration of political authority, he became a signer of the death warrant of King Charles I, who was beheaded at the Palace of Whitehall on 30 January 1649.

Cromwell is remembered as a hero by some historians, and a virtual dictator by others. He ruled as lord protector until his death on 3 September 1658. Following a funeral patterned after that of King James I, he was buried with great solemnity at Westminster Abbey. Within months of his death, those loyal to the crown gained power once again. In 1661, Cromwell's body was unceremoniously exhumed from the abbey, chained, dragged to the Tyburn gallows, symbolically executed on the anniversary of Charles I's beheading, and thrown into a pit. Cromwell's head was stuck on a pole and displayed before Westminster Hall until 1685. The exact location of his remains is now unknown. His burial place in Westminster Abbey, located in the Royal Air Force Chapel, was marked with a stone in the 19th century.



Buried at Westminster Abbey, Oliver Cromwell's remains were exhumed and symbolically executed during the Restoration

dedicated on 13 October 1269, but he did not live to attend the ceremony.

Henry III was buried near the Shrine of Edward the Confessor, and in time the remains of numerous other monarchs found their final resting places nearby, including Edward I, Edward III, Richard II and Henry V. A total of 18 kings and queens of England are buried at Westminster Abbey. Among these is every Tudor monarch, with the exception of Henry VIII.

A groundswell of reverence for the Virgin Mary emerged during the 13th century, and one of the principal components of the abbey, the Lady Chapel, was built at the direction of Henry III. By the early 16th century, King Henry VII commissioned the construction of a splendid new

five-year reign from 1553 to 1558, is buried close to her half-sister and successor, Elizabeth I, whose reign is remembered for her Protestantism and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth's cousin and a devout Roman Catholic, was convicted of conspiring to assassinate Elizabeth and beheaded in 1587. In 1612 Mary's son, King James I, ordered her body exhumed from its resting place at Peterborough Castle and reinterred in the King Henry VII Chapel. Although its location was lost for years, the final resting place of James I, remembered for his sharp conflicts with parliament and his commissioning of a version of the *Holy Bible* that remains one of the most significant books in Western culture,

"Perhaps the most famous enclave in Westminster Abbey is Poets' Corner"

Lady Chapel, begun on the same site at the east end of the cathedral in 1503 and completed nearly 30 years later. Its pendant fan vault ceiling is recognised as an architectural masterpiece. Henry VII died in 1509 and is interred there in a tomb fashioned by Florentine Renaissance artists.

The struggle for religious primacy in Britain between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches embroiled monarchs in disputes and intrigue that carried on for decades. Despite their differences in life, three queens who played key roles during that turbulent time are buried near one another in the King Henry VII Chapel. Queen Mary I, better known as 'Bloody Mary' for her zealous persecution of Protestants during a

was discovered in the Chapel during a 19th-century excavation.

For several hundred years, burial in Westminster Abbey was open to anyone who could afford the associated cost. However, that practice eventually changed to include only notable individuals. Among these is the scientist Sir Isaac Newton, whose discoveries of the laws of motion and mathematical description of gravity were among the monumental contributions to the Scientific Revolution. Newton died in 1727, and his grave is located in front of the abbey choir screen. Another vital scientific voice, Charles Darwin, who developed the Theory of Evolution, was buried on 26 April 1882, in the north aisle of the nave.



Tourists walk through the nave and contemplate the splendour of Westminster Abbey



Bones found at Westminster Abbey in 2015. The footings were built between 1246 and 1250

Among the many other prominent interments are those of explorer David Livingstone, prime ministers Neville Chamberlain and Clement Attlee, and actor Sir Laurence Olivier.

The remains of the Unknown Warrior, an unidentified British casualty of World War I, were brought to Westminster Abbey and buried in a solemn ceremony on 11 November 1920. The grave is located at the west end of the nave, and the inscription on the stone reads in part: "The Lord knoweth them that are his..."

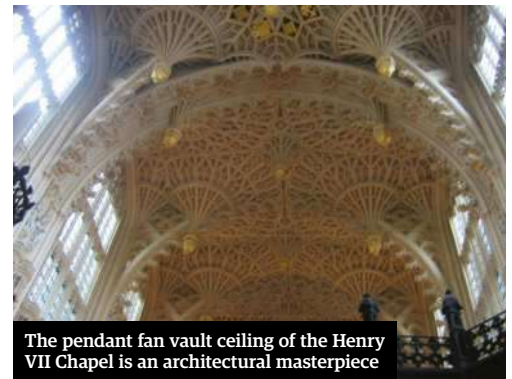
Perhaps the most famous enclave in Westminster Abbey is Poets' Corner, located in the south transept. The first noted burial in the vicinity was that of Geoffrey Chaucer, the 14th century author of *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer was buried in the abbey not because of his literary achievements, but because of his service as clerk of the king's works, responsible for repairs in the Palace of Westminster. During subsequent years, many eminent authors, poets, composers and performers have found their final rest in Poets' Corner, or have been otherwise memorialised there. They include Edmund Spenser, Robert Browning, CS Lewis, Charles Dickens, John Dryden, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, George Frideric Handel, Jane Austen, William Blake, Charlotte, Anne and Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Lewis Carroll, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, TS Eliot,

David Frost, Henry James, John Keats, Dylan Thomas, DH Lawrence, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Oscar Wild and many more.

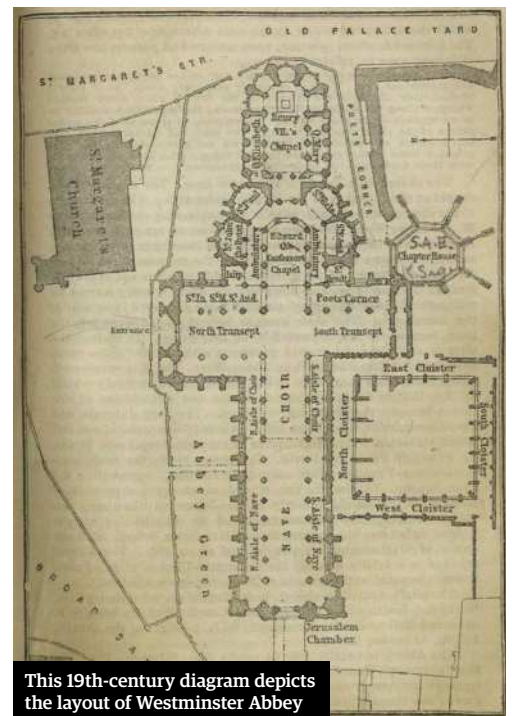
Although memorialised in Poets' Corner, Ben Jonson, whose play *Every Man In His Humour* included William Shakespeare in its cast, was buried in the northern aisle of the nave. Jonson is said to have been too poor for a recumbent burial, and either begged or was allowed to pay for a small 24-inch by 24-inch plot that would accommodate his interment in an upright position.

Some historians believe that the Saxon king, Harold Godwinson, was crowned at Westminster Abbey in early 1066. In October of that year, the Normans under William the Conqueror defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings. On 25 December 1066, William was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey, and since that time the coronations of 39 English and British monarchs have taken place there.

Only King Edward V and King Edward VIII, who were never actually crowned, interrupted the centuries-old cavalcade. Edward V ruled for 86 days at the age of 12 in the spring of 1483. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London along with his brother, the Duke of York, and the two were subsequently murdered during the controversy that swirled around the accession and reign of their uncle, King Richard III.



The pendant fan vault ceiling of the Henry VII Chapel is an architectural masterpiece



This 19th-century diagram depicts the layout of Westminster Abbey



Westminster Abbey stands majestically at twilight in this 2014 photo



VISIT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Westminster Abbey is open to visitors Monday through Saturday, generally 9.30am to 3.30pm throughout the year. Tickets are available for purchase online and early arrival is best.

King Edward VIII ruled for less than a year following the death of his father, George V, in 1936. Edward VIII stunned the world with his abdication in favour of the "woman I love," American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson. His younger brother, George VI, was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 12 May 1937.

The last coronation held at Westminster Abbey occurred on 2 June 1953, when Queen Elizabeth II succeeded her father, George VI. In 2015, Elizabeth II became the longest reigning British monarch, and in 2017 she became the first to celebrate her Sapphire Jubilee, commemorating an impressive reign of 65 years.

Seventeen royal weddings have taken place at Westminster Abbey. In 1100, King Henry I married Matilda of Scotland in the first such union. The most recent royal wedding was that of Prince

Memorials adorn the walls of Poets' Corner inside Westminster Abbey



The Battle of Hastings, as depicted in *The Bayeux Tapestry*. The crowning of its victor William the Conqueror was the first documented coronation in Westminster Abbey



The north entrance of Westminster Abbey displays soaring Gothic architecture

Westminster Abbey through time

Significant events in British history are remembered at Westminster Abbey here

700

- **Early Saxon holy site**
King Sebert possibly founds a Christian site at Thorney Island. It's believed his remains are in Westminster Abbey.

960

- **Christian religious community**
King Edgar and St Dunstan, bishop of London, establish a Christian enclave on the future site of Westminster Abbey.



1042

- **Edward the Confessor begins build**
In gratitude to the pope and in honour of St Peter, Edward begins a place of worship.

1066

- **Norman conquest and coronation**
William the Conqueror is crowned king of England at Westminster Abbey, 25 December.

1245

- **Henry the builder**
King Henry III embarks on the construction programme that results in the Gothic edifice of Westminster Abbey.

Westminster Abbey: Guardian of history



A procession of Knights of the Bath passes outside Westminster Abbey

William, duke of Cambridge, and Catherine 'Kate' Middleton on 29 April 2011. While royals may choose the venue of their nuptials, William's private secretary, Jamie Lowther-Pinkerton, explained why the couple decided on choosing Westminster Abbey. "Even at the altar, it seems like a parish church," he remarked.

For centuries, royal weddings have been arranged to further political ambitions or cement relations between dominions. On 4 January 1243, Richard, earl of Cornwall and later king of Germany, wed Sanchia of Provence, sister of Eleanor of Provence, the wife of King Henry III. On 20 January 1382, King Richard II married Anne of Bohemia, and on 18 January 1486, King Henry VII wed Elizabeth of York.

Five hundred years passed before the next royal wedding at Westminster Abbey, when Princess Patricia of Connaught married Captain the Honourable Alexander Ramsay on 27 February 1919. On 26 April 1923, Prince Albert, duke of York and the future King George VI, wed Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, later Queen Elizabeth the

Queen Mother. Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen Elizabeth II, married Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, the Duke of Edinburgh on 20 November 1947. Princess Anne, the only daughter of Elizabeth II, married Captain Mark Phillips on 14 November 1973. The Queen's second son, Prince Andrew, Duke of York, married Sarah Ferguson at Westminster Abbey on 23 July 1986.

For nearly a millennium, Westminster Abbey has served as a scene of sorrow, joy, intrigue and reverence. A shrine to the history of the UK, it remains a functioning Church of England house of worship, a royal peculiar, which is not subject to the jurisdiction of the diocese in which it lies, but only to the monarch. Within its walls an independent day and boarding school has nearly 800 students, while the Abbey Choir School is charged with the education of approximately 30 boys who perform in the choral group.

Although it belongs to the British people and the ages, Westminster Abbey remains alive with the nation's culture as a symbol of its glorious past and a promise of its prosperous future.

St Edward's Chair and coronation

For more than 700 years, St Edward's Chair has served its purpose during coronations at Westminster Abbey

Since 1308, British kings and queens have been crowned while seated on St Edward's Chair, fashioned by order of King Edward I. The chair resides within the abbey near the west end of the nave in St George's Chapel. It was intended also to enclose the Stone of Scone, or Stone of Destiny, the ancient stone upon which Irish and Scottish monarchs were said to have been seated during coronation ceremonies. While the stone was returned to Edinburgh Castle in Scotland in 1996, it is intended to return to Westminster Abbey for future coronations. Through the centuries, the ornate chair has been the object of souvenir hunters, and even a bomb attack in 1914, which broke off a corner. The chair is scheduled for conservation work, and it bears graffiti that has, in its own way, become historic. The initials and etchings of school children and tourists during the 18th and 19th centuries are visible.



This 1855 engraving depicts St Edward's Chair with the Stone of Scone secured within beneath the seat

1308
● **Coronation of Edward II**
Edward II is first king of England to be crowned while seated in St Edward's Chair.

1603
● **Burial of Elizabeth I**
Queen Elizabeth I is interred in the Henry VII Chapel. Her remains are later moved to a new Chapel location.

1838
● **Queen Victoria ascends to throne**
Queen Victoria is crowned during a ceremony that lasts for five hours.



1953
● **Coronation of Elizabeth II**
Queen Elizabeth II, longest reigning British monarch, is crowned in Westminster Abbey upon the death of her father, King George VI.

2011
● **Royal wedding**
Prince William weds Catherine Middleton amid pomp and grandeur in Westminster Abbey.



© Getty Images



**REMEMBERED IN
SMITHFIELD**

On 15 July 2015, a carved triptych memorial to the Peasants' Revolt was unveiled along the northern wall of St Bart's Hospital in Smithfield, where memorials to other people and events in history reside.



The Peasants' Revolt

Discontent among the people fuelled the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, a brief but profound period of unrest in English history

In the wake of the Black Death that claimed millions of lives across Europe in the mid-14th century, social and economic upheaval brought class struggle to the forefront in England a generation later. As much as a third of the population of Europe died during the reign of the dreaded disease, and though life in Medieval England would never fully return to its prior bucolic condition, the persistent shortages of manpower and food that came as a result of the disease were very real.

Economically motivated to take advantage of the labour shortage, English peasants, or serfs (often indentured to the landed gentry and considered little more than chattel property), demanded higher wages for their work. In response, the government enacted the Statute of

Labourers in 1351, fixing wages at pre-Black Death levels and making it illegal to break a pre-existing contract. While the price of goods had risen steadily, fixed wages fostered diminished buying power among the peasants. In addition, England had been deeply involved in the Hundred Years' War. The cost of the conflict weighed heavily on the national treasury and by 1377, the government had levied a new poll tax, essentially a duty to be paid by every adult in the realm. Unlike other taxes, the poll tax was to be paid by both the wealthy and the poor.

The chief proponent of the poll tax was John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, foremost among the class of barons that wielded real political power. King Edward III had died in 1377; his son, Edward - The Black Prince - preceded him in death a

"While the price of goods had risen steadily, fixed wages fostered diminished buying power among the peasants"

year earlier. Therefore Richard II, son of the Black Prince, ascended to the crown at just ten.

The plight of the peasants reached fever pitch as the position of the Church became apparent. The Church was a principal landowner in England, and to line their own coffers, its leaders, the Archbishop of Canterbury and prelates across the countryside, actually aligned themselves with the barons. The common people were enraged and turned against the Church. An outspoken dissenter was the priest John Ball, who railed against the institution's excesses and its betrayal of the people. Ball was arrested and held in Maidstone Castle.

The magnitude of the peasants' discontent was recognised in the dwindling sums of poll tax collections in successive years. While some peasants did not have the means to pay, others refused. When tax collectors rode into villages and summoned the people to render payment, they just stayed away. By 1380, the decline in revenue was quite noticeable. John of Gaunt sent his agents out a second time to gather funds in full.

One of these agents, Thomas Bampton, travelled to Brentwood in Essex to discharge his duty. On 30 May 1381, Bampton called the peasants

from the nearby villages of Fobbing, Stanford and Corningham to assemble, and demanded payment. Those who had already paid and were obliged to do so a second time were angered. They were also required to pay the taxes of those who refused to appear. The following day, Bampton and his entourage were set upon. Three were killed, and the others barely escaped the disturbance with their lives. Days later, Sir Robert Belknap, chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas, was in Essex at the time and was also driven away.

Within days, the uprising gained momentum. In Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire, peasants attacked tax collectors, manor homes and church

By this time, the sympathetic poor of London opened the gates of the city and the crossing of London Bridge to allow the marchers entry into the city streets. They immediately set fire to the Savoy Palace, home of John of Gaunt, and burned other buildings associated with their oppressors. On 14 June, the 14-year-old King Richard met with the Essex peasants at Mile End. He agreed to a list of demands that would apparently curb the existing abuses, authorising the granting of charters to such effect.

Nevertheless, the unrest continued. One angry mob stormed the Tower of London and dragged Simon Sudbury, the archbishop of Canterbury,

"They immediately set fire to the Savoy Palace and burned other buildings"

properties. Essex and Kent became the epicentre of the gathering storm. Rioters seized Maidstone Castle, releasing John Ball on 7 June. Three days later, a mob from Kent marched into Canterbury and held services in the Cathedral, installing a humble monk as 'Archbishop' while the actual leader of the Church was in London.

Wat Tyler of Kent emerged as a leader of the burgeoning rebellion, and soon the peasants, their number estimated up to 100,000, were on the march towards London. The Essex demonstrators reached the capital on 12 June, and camped at Mile End, north of the River Thames just beyond Aldgate. A day later, the protestors from Kent reached Blackheath. The march apparently took authorities in London by surprise. King Richard evacuated Windsor and took refuge in the Tower of London. He responded to a message from the rebels, agreeing to meet them at Rotherhithe on the Thames that day. However, his advisors were alarmed at the sight of the huge gathering and would not allow the monarch to make landfall.

Robert Hales, the crown's treasurer, and John Legge, originator of the poll tax, to nearby Tower Hill, where the trio was promptly beheaded. Twickenham, Cheswick and Clapham, villages on the outskirts of London, were sacked and put to the torch. Elsewhere, prisons were opened, and legal documents were burned.

Although some peasants were satisfied with King Richard's response and headed back to their villages, a diehard cluster led by Wat Tyler remained sceptical, and sought to impose additional demands on the crown.

King Richard agreed to meet Tyler and his cohorts at Smithfield within the walls of the capital city. The meeting was tense and reached the brink of open warfare when Tyler apparently refused to dismount and show respect for the king, supposedly spitting in the monarch's direction and speaking insolently. William Walworth, lord mayor of London, pulled Tyler from his horse and hacked at the rebel leader with his sword. It is unclear whether Walworth or one of his attendants delivered the death blow,

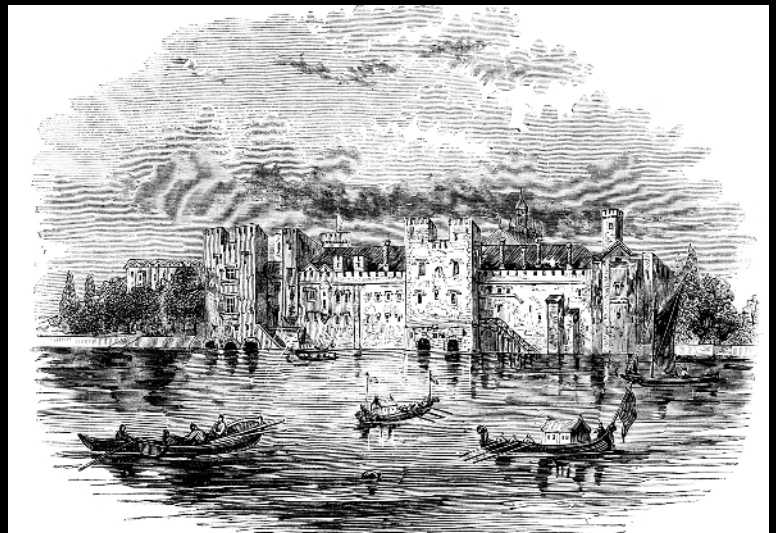


King Richard II attempts to meet with peasants along the River Thames during the revolt

The Savoy Theatre and Hotel rose from the ashes

A prominent casualty of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, the Savoy Palace was a symbol of the rich, royal and powerful in Medieval England. At the time of the revolt, the palace was the home of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Gaunt had inherited the estate to the north of London, which had been constructed after a land grant from King Henry III in 1246. During the next century, the road from London to the area known as the Strand, where the Savoy Palace stood, was paved, and the Savoy became the most opulent and notable home among those of contemporary noblemen in England.

During the Peasants' Revolt, the Savoy Palace was ransacked and burned. Its rich tapestries were torched, jewellery and other trappings of wealth were destroyed, and furnishings were thrown into the Thames. Although the palace was devastated, the area retained the name of Savoy. In the early 16th century, the Savoy Hospital was founded. It operated for two centuries, and fire destroyed much of the complex. The property lay dormant for years until Richard D'Oyly Carte, who became wealthy as the producer of Gilbert and Sullivan operas, opened the Savoy Theatre in the 1880s. The Savoy Hotel, billed as the most famous in London, followed.





Priest John Ball addresses angry peasants while leader Wat Tyler, in red, looks on

but as Tyler lay motionless, the king showed tremendous presence of mind for one so young and in such imminent peril. He rode among the peasants and shouted: "I am your captain! Follow me!" Richard led the peasants away from the scene and agreed to their terms, effectively ending the Peasants' Revolt in London.

Many former rebels, assured that their charters and promises of clemency would prevent retribution, returned to their homes. However, a call was issued for troops to rally and pacify the countryside. As soldiers restored order, some of those who held charters were executed. John Ball was arrested at St Albans. King Richard witnessed his execution - hanged, drawn and quartered - in the village marketplace. As many as 1,500 peasants were put to death.

The Peasants' Revolt, which had lasted less than a month, was soon quelled. Although the charters were refuted - the king stated he had been coerced into making agreements with the protesters - and in many ways life for the peasants returned to the status quo, the poll tax was never again levied and the institution of serfdom had suffered significant damage.

Peasants assail points across London

The areas that became part of the action

Prison cells spring open

While unrest rolls across London, angry peasants launch attacks on the Newgate and Fleet prisons, burning buildings and setting some prisoners free during a wave of violence that also threatens foreigners in the city.

Essex meets Mile End

Angry peasants from Essex reach the city of London on 12 June 1381, camping at Mile End. Two days later, King Richard II meets with them and promises to accede to their demands.

London spared at Smithfield

On 15 June 1381, London is spared further violence as King Richard II quiets a gathering of peasants at Smithfield despite the killing of their leader, Wat Tyler, and leads them out of the city.

Savoy Palace is ravaged

Symbolic of the wealthy and aristocratic class that oppressed them, Savoy Palace, the home of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, is put to the torch by enraged peasants during the 1381 revolt.



Terror at the Tower of London

Once King Richard's refuge, the Tower of London is stormed by peasants on 14 June 1381. Three prominent Church and government leaders are dragged to nearby Tower Hill and then promptly beheaded.

Staging at Southwark

After King Richard II's failed foray to Rotherhithe on the Thames, peasants gather at Southwark, begin to stir, and make their way towards London Bridge, one of several gateways into the streets of the capital city.

London Bridge is opening up

On the afternoon of 13 June 1381, peasants advance from their camp at Southwark and approach London Bridge, confronting its defences, which are opened from within to allow their entry into the city's streets.

Henry VIII's —Tower of Terror—

The turbulent reign of Henry VIII saw many men, women and children imprisoned at his majesty's pleasure - and not all escaped with their lives

The Tower of London has a dark legend attached to it - a grim tale of imprisonment, execution and torture. The Tower's forbidding reputation was born in the reign of Henry VIII, a period of unrivalled religious upheaval, bloodshed and rebellion when more than 100 of Henry's subjects found themselves incarcerated within the Tower's walls.

No end date was set for imprisonment in this time - prisoners were held as long as the king wished to keep them, in some cases for decades. Their departure from imprisonment might be heralded by word of royal pardon,

or simply by a gruff exhortation to prepare themselves for imminent execution.

Many of Henry's prisoners are familiar to us. Most have heard of Thomas More, and of Henry's executed queens Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. But what of the other men and women who found themselves imprisoned in this foreboding fortress? As Henry's reign progressed, prisoner numbers rose to an almost unmanageable level. Treason, heresy and political discord meant noble and commoner alike found themselves incarcerated here, facing a very uncertain future. These are the forgotten prisoners of Henry VIII.



WILLIAM DE LA POLE: THREAT TO THE THRONE



William has the unhappy distinction of being the longest serving prisoner in the Tower's history. Jailed by Henry VIII's father, he remained in the Tower for the majority of Henry's reign. His crime? Yorkist blood. When the Lancastrian Henry VII emerged victorious in the Wars of the Roses - which had seen the Houses of York and Lancaster tear the country apart for 30 years - he claimed to have ended the wars. He married Elizabeth of York to reconcile their families, but he had not ended the Yorkist threat. He faced two serious invasions led by pretenders, and even at the end of his reign there were still many potential rivals for the throne. William de la Pole was one of them. As Queen Elizabeth's cousin, he shared her royal blood. But while William's brothers directly threatened the Tudor crown - fighting, plotting and claiming the throne for themselves - William was not much of a troublemaker. He was arrested in 1502 as part of a round up of de la Pole supporters and condemned as a traitor by parliament in 1504. Even after his brothers were all dead, William remained incarcerated, more because of what he represented - a figurehead for further Yorkist insurrection - than for any personal wrongdoing. He died still a prisoner of the Tower, after almost 38 years.



**VISIT THE TOWER
OF LONDON**

You can visit the castle today - take a Yeoman Warder tour of the grounds and around its towers and chambers. See the world-famous Crown Jewels and royal armouries up close.



ALICE WOLF: THE ESCAPE ARTIST

We associate the Tower of London with powerful, politically sensitive prisoners, but Alice Wolf was neither. In July 1533, she and her husband John lured two foreign merchants into a boat on the Thames where they robbed and murdered them. When the bodies were discovered, Alice and John were quickly carted off to the Tower. As the Wolfs had committed their crimes on a boat, they were convicted of piracy, the penalty for which was a drawn-out death by drowning. It was an end Alice was determined not to meet.

She was kept within the Inner Ward, the most difficult part of the Tower to reach, but by remarkable good fortune, Alice's jailer was one John Bawde, a long-term associate of the Wolfs. He agreed to help Alice escape, and on 24 March 1534, everything was in place. Alice had appealed to the daughter of the lieutenant to free her from her shackles, enabling her to move freely around

her cell. With her hands and feet unfettered, she shook the door to her cell open - it was only hasped with an old bit of bone. The outer door was opened with a key provided by Bawde. Then, disguised in men's clothing, Alice crept to the roof of St Thomas's Tower on the outer limits of the walls, where Bawde was waiting.

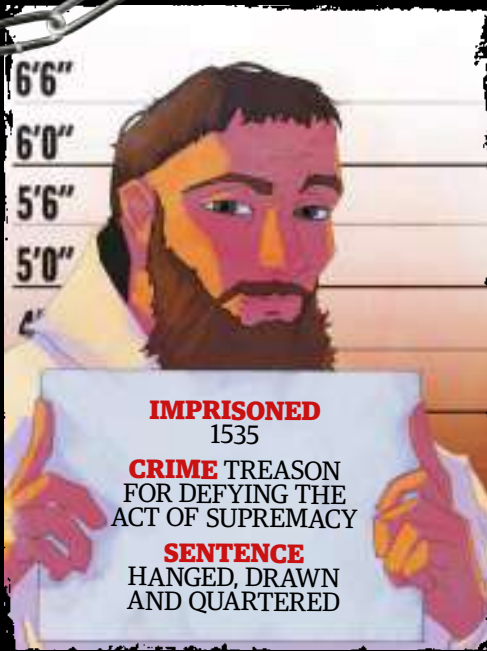
As the clock struck ten, they slid down a rope to the wharf below. From there, they boarded a little boat and rowed around to some steps outside the Tower boundaries. Freedom was in their grasp. But as Bawde and Alice walked up the hill from the river, they were spotted by two watchmen. Alice's disguise did not fool them and both prisoner and jailer were dragged back to the Tower. The unfortunate Bawde was tortured for his betrayal and then hanged. Alice and her husband were drowned in the Thames. Alice Wolf remains the only woman to have escaped the Tower of London, if only for a short while.



Henry's turbulent reign

Henry's reign saw nearly 40 years of political and personal highs and lows, with varying degrees of popular support

PUBLIC OPINION	1509		1513		1520		1533		1534		1536	
	Accession		Battle of Flodden		Field of the Cloth of Gold		Divorce		The Act of Supremacy		Execution of Anne Boleyn	
	Henry VIII succeeds his father at 17 years old. He swiftly marries Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon and they have a joint coronation.		English forces win a decisive victory over the Scots. Henry's brother-in-law James IV is killed in the battle. Henry himself is away fighting in France when the battle is won.		Henry VIII meets the French king Francis I in the Pale of Calais. Magnificent revelries ensue, celebrating 'universal peace' between the old rivals.		Henry finally succeeds in annulling his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and remarries the rather less popular Anne Boleyn.		Henry VIII appoints himself supreme head of the Church in England. Shortly afterwards, a new Treasons Act makes it illegal to deny Henry's supremacy.		Henry's second wife Anne is executed for treason - the first time in history a queen of England is killed. Within a fortnight, Henry marries her lady-in-waiting Jane Seymour.	



SEBASTIAN NEWDIGATE: THE MEDDLING MONK

Sebastian was born to a well-connected Middlesex family and grew up at court, where he enjoyed Henry VIII's favour and was helped to a good marriage. After his wife's death, Sebastian turned to religion and entered the London Charterhouse. As a monk of the Charterhouse (a 'Carthusian'), Sebastian was at the forefront of a propaganda war against the rising tide of Protestantism in England, seizing books and exposing radical sects of heretics. When Henry VIII insisted on being acknowledged as supreme head of the Church of England, he inevitably met fierce opposition from Sebastian and his brothers. The Carthusians begrudgingly accepted Henry's divorce from his wife, but they would not deny the supremacy of the pope. Henry's attempts to force the Carthusians to accept his leadership were brutal. The prior of the London order was executed in his habit, and his

arms fixed over the entrance to the Charterhouse as a warning. Still the monks held out.

Sebastian was among three Carthusians imprisoned in the Tower of London in an attempt to force their submission: for two weeks they were chained to pillars, standing in their own excrement. Allegedly the king himself visited to appeal for Newdigate to accept his supremacy, but he and his brothers would not give in.

Sebastian eventually met the same fate as his prior, one of 18 Carthusian monks that were killed by King Henry. On 19 June 1535, he was dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn and there hanged and quartered.



MARGARET DOUGLAS: UNLUCKY IN LOVE

Margaret's mother was Henry VIII's elder sister, the one-time queen of Scotland, but her royal blood was to prove a mixed blessing. Margaret grew up in comfort at the English court, becoming a leading light of the literary clique surrounding the new queen, Anne Boleyn. She exchanged poetry with other courtiers, notably with Anne's uncle, Thomas Howard. Their relationship developed into a serious affair with the couple meeting clandestinely in friends' chambers to exchange tokens of their love: a portrait, a ring, a diamond. Eventually, at Easter 1536, they were secretly betrothed. For members of the blood royal to get engaged without the king's permission

was a misstep under any circumstances, but Margaret and Thomas's timing was catastrophic. The fall of Anne Boleyn in May 1536 left Henry with a sickly bastard son and two daughters he had declared illegitimate. Margaret was suddenly

*"Alas! That ever prison strong
Should two such lovers separate
Yet though our bodies suffereth wrong
Our hearts should be of one estate"*

next in line to the throne. Her romantic entanglement now took on the dimension of a political coup. Henry VIII amended the law so that marrying into the blood royal without permission was treason and Margaret and Thomas were sent to the Tower. There they exchanged miserable poetry about their star-crossed love.

Although Margaret was restored to favour, Thomas died of sickness contracted in prison. It was a harsh punishment for falling in love.



						POSITIVE
The Pilgrimage of Grace begins Rebellion breaks out in the north in opposition to Henry's religious and economic changes. The revolt is known as the Pilgrimage of Grace.	Birth of Prince Edward A son is finally born to Henry and his wife Jane Seymour, joining Henry's children Mary and Elizabeth from his previous marriages. Jane dies 12 days later.	Excommunication Henry VIII is officially excommunicated by papal bull for his assumption of the supremacy, for dissolving England's monasteries and for attacking religious shrines.	Wife number six After two more failed marriages - one ending in divorce, one in execution - Henry marries the intelligent and experienced Catherine Parr. She reunites the family and acts as regent when he goes to war.	War with France With the economy struggling and coinage debased, Henry sets off to win back France. He takes Boulogne but bankrupts the country.	Death Henry VIII dies, leaving his nine-year-old son to inherit the throne as King Edward VI.	PUBLIC OPINION
1536	1537	1538	1543	1544	1547	NEGATIVE

HOW TO GET BY IN PRISON

Tudor prisons provided very little for their inmates. Here are some tips to help make your stay as pleasant as possible



BE RICH

Unless you like sleeping on beds of straw and eating bread rolls every day, it pays to be rich in prison. Everything from fresh clothes and furniture to servants and pets can be brought into the Tower - for the right price.



BE NICE TO YOUR GUARD

Although he keeps you locked up, a guard is also your link to the outside world. From messages to food, it all comes through him. If you get on well, he might even be willing to help you escape.



BRING SOME HOME COMFORTS

The wealthy and important are allowed to bring their servants to the Tower - and even their families should they wish. These comforts of home can make a stay much more enjoyable.



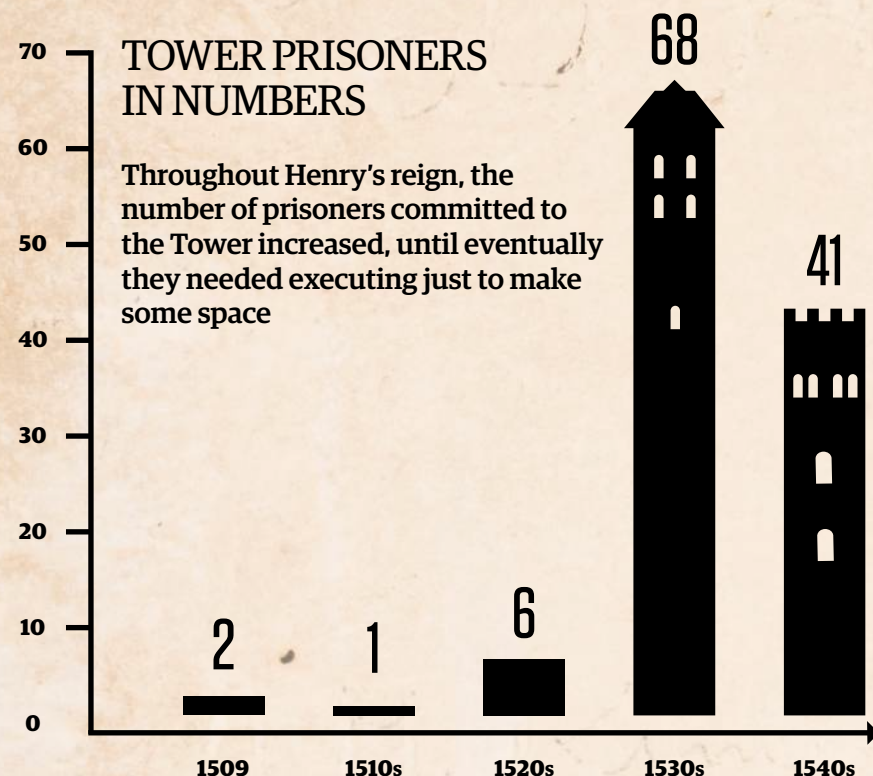
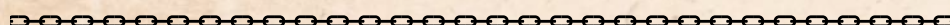
HAVE FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Your chances of release are much better if you have an ally who is close to the king and has a bit of influence over him. That is, as long as they don't also join you as a prisoner in the Tower of London.



CONSIDER ESCAPE

A surprising number of Tower prisoners successfully escaped - and if you get out, you can flee into exile or take sanctuary at a local church. Of course, if you are caught, it'll likely be the death penalty for you.



THE TOWER'S FIVE MOST INFAMOUS INMATES

Some of the most powerful and intriguing figures in history have been imprisoned in the Tower of London



Anne Boleyn

Date of imprisonment: 1536

The first queen of England ever to be executed, Anne was accused of treason against her husband Henry VIII. She was beheaded on Tower Green.



The Princes in the Tower

Date of imprisonment: 1483

12-year-old Edward V and his brother were brought to the Tower by their uncle. Just days later, Uncle Richard was declared king and it is widely believed he had the boys put to death.



Sir Walter Raleigh

Dates of imprisonment: 1592-93, 1603-16, 1618

Walter lived in the Bloody Tower with his entire family and spent his imprisonment growing tobacco and writing a history of the world. Some say that his ghost still walks the Tower walls.



Lady Jane Grey

Dates of imprisonment: 1553-54

Protestant Jane inherited the throne from her cousin Edward VI but lost it to her Catholic rival Mary I. A year later, Jane was beheaded within the Tower.



Rudolf Hess

Date of imprisonment: 1941

Hitler's deputy parachuted into Britain in 1941, hoping to end the war. He was imprisoned at the Tower for a few days, the last state prisoner kept there.

MARGARET BULMER: THE RELENTLESS REBEL



Margaret was one among tens of thousands who became embroiled in the most serious rebellion of Henry VIII's reign: the Pilgrimage of Grace. Coming after years of upheaval that had seen Henry set himself up as the supreme head of the Church of England, the rebellion spread from Lincolnshire to Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria. A rebel army of churchmen, commoners and gentry called for the reversal of the dissolution of the monasteries and an end to enclosure and unpopular new taxes. Despite its mass support, the rebellion was brutally defeated and more than 200 rebels were killed.

As the illegitimate daughter of the duke of Buckingham - beheaded for treason in 1521 - Margaret Bulmer may have had a personal axe to grind with Henry's government. Her husband Sir

John later claimed they had been forced to support the pilgrimage when their home was threatened, but by early 1537, he and Margaret had been drawn deep into the rebellion. By then, rebel leaders were being rounded up and arrested. The Bulmers had three options: flee into exile (an admission of guilt), risk answering a royal summons, or raise rebellion once more. Margaret argued for the latter, saying that to be separated from her husband would be worse than death. Sir John agreed, but their plot was swiftly betrayed and both Bulmers were arrested and sent to the Tower. They pleaded guilty together, were condemned together and were executed for treason on the same day. Sir John was given the relative mercy of hanging and beheading but Margaret suffered the full penalty of a female traitor and was burned to death at Smithfield.

MARGARET POLE, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY: MOTHER PAYING FOR THE SINS OF HER SON

Margaret had a long history with the Tower: her father George, duke of Clarence, had been drowned in a butt of malmsey wine there when she was a child. The royal blood she inherited from Clarence made her a threat to the throne throughout Henry VIII's reign, but it was her son Reginald's actions that doomed her. In 1536, Reginald was a cardinal in Rome, and his condemnation of Henry VIII's religious changes exacerbated already tense relations between the king and the Pole family. Margaret had been a close friend and servant of both Catherine of Aragon and her daughter Princess Mary. She was probably as unhappy with Henry's religious changes as Reginald, but astute enough not to admit it.

When it was discovered that members of her family were in contact with Reginald, Margaret was seized. With evidence probably fabricated by Thomas Cromwell, she was arrested in 1539. She was condemned as a traitor and imprisoned in the Tower. During her incarceration, the 67-year-old Margaret was provided servants, clothing and food and probably hoped for a pardon. Suddenly, in May 1541, it was announced she would be executed. "Not knowing of what crime she was accused, nor how she had been sentenced," Margaret went to her execution. There was not even time to bring the executioner to London so, "a wretched and blundering youth... hacked her head and shoulders to pieces in the most pitiful manner."



WALTER, LORD HUNGERFORD: FAITHFUL SERVANT



Walter Hungerford's political rise and fall was closely connected with that of his patron, Thomas Cromwell. While Cromwell was Henry VIII's chief minister, Hungerford's star was very much in the ascendant: he became a sheriff and a baron. But it all came crashing down when Henry divorced Anne and blamed Cromwell for the disastrous marriage. Hungerford's fall was swift to follow. Accusations of "certain grave misdemeanours" spiralled into bizarre accusations about the activities within his West Country home. Hungerford's wife Elizabeth claimed to have been "continually locked up in one of the towers of his castle" for three or four years, with keepers who had repeatedly attempted to poison her. Lady Hungerford accused her husband of wanting

her dead because it was cheaper than getting a divorce. She also noticed "many strange things about her husband's demeanour": he had consulted sorcerers and a witch called Mother Roche to learn "how long the King should live". He had aided and abetted a traitor who sympathised with the Pilgrimage of Grace, and he had been having sexual relations with his male servants, which was a felony. It added up to a compelling blend of heresy, sexual misconduct and treason.

After a brief imprisonment in the Tower, Hungerford joined his old master Cromwell on the scaffold at Tower Hill on 28 July 1540. Still associated even in death, the heads of Hungerford and Cromwell were exhibited together on London Bridge after their execution.

London 43 CE to 1564

1. c.90 The London Wall

Nobody knows why the Romans built the London Wall, but its construction went on for centuries. Although little of the wall now remains, you can see the surviving fragments of the mighty Roman wall near Tower Hill station.



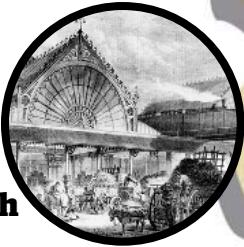
2. 851 Viking invasion

Londinium was brutally ransacked by Vikings on several occasions throughout the 9th century. The Museum of London has a collection of weapons, coins and other artefacts that were discovered in the city.



3. 1014 Borough Market

A thousand years after it opened, Borough Market is still London's most respected produce market. With an enormous range of stalls showcasing food and drink from around the globe, it's the perfect place to soak up some history and relax.



4. 1099 Westminster Hall

The historic and breathtaking Westminster Hall is the oldest building on the Parliamentary Estate. Steeped in history, tours of the Hall offer visitors a chance to step back in time and discover who governed, dined and even held royal tournaments within its walls.



1123 Smithfield Meat Market

Smithfield is the country's largest wholesale meat market and beneath the ground, a labyrinth of historic tunnels can still be seen.

5

6

1215 Magna Carta

Following the First Barons' War, Magna Carta became enshrined in English law. The British Library holds a copy of the historic document.

4

14

16

13

1305 Eltham Palace

Eltham Palace is a uniquely curious mix of medieval ruins and 1930s art-deco, with glorious gardens.

7

1371 London Charterhouse

The Charterhouse is home to a museum telling the story of this unique complex of buildings from the Black Death to today.

1397 Dick Whittington elected mayor

Dick Whittington is memorialised by the ancient way marker at which Whittington heard the Bow Bells telling his fortune.

13. 1466 Crosby Hall

Originally built in 1466 in Bishopsgate, Crosby Hall was moved to Cheyne Walk in 1910. Although its ruins have been incorporated into a private home, the fragments of the hall are the only example of a medieval merchant house that remains in London.

14. 1500 The Fleet Street press

Although most newspapers have long since moved out of the city, Fleet Street remains the spiritual home of British journalism, thanks to its rich print heritage. It's also the notorious haunt of fictional killer Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber.

15. 1513 Deptford Royal Dockyard

Though the magnificent dockyard has long since been dismantled, traces still remain. Visitors can still glimpse the wonderful gates of the Royal Victoria Victualling Yard and see not only the officers' quarters, but also a row of original Georgian houses.

16. 1536 Hyde Park

Henry VIII established Hyde Park as a private hunting ground in 1536. It's an extensive public park now, offering an oasis of calm in the centre of the city. You can ride, row or just relax in the breathtaking grounds.

1348-50 Black Death

An enormous Black Death cemetery was excavated beneath the Royal Mint courtyard in 1988.

1308 Woolwich Ferry

Take a trip across the River Thames on this historic ferry, which has been running for eight centuries.

1354 The first Lord Mayor of London

The first Lord Mayor of London was appointed in 1354; today, the Lord Mayor lives in the magnificent Mansion House.

Uncovering SHAKESPEARE'S LONDON

Archaeological excavations at a rediscovered playhouse are revealing new insights into theatre during the time of the Bard



SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

Shakespeare's Globe was rebuilt and opened in 1997 close to its original site. It hosts productions in the summer and tours all year that take you through its history from 1599 all the way to today.



When William Shakespeare travelled to late-Elizabethan London to begin his career as a playwright, he had no idea that it was a journey that would eventually lead to him becoming one of the most famous writers the world has ever known. However, Shakespeare was also lucky; the right man in the right place at the right time. Without doubt a supremely skilled playwright, he also happened to arrive in London just as a revolution was occurring in public entertainment.

Prior to the Elizabethan era, plays were put on by itinerant companies who wandered from town to town and performed for payment and lodgings. It may have been one of these touring companies visiting his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon that ignited Shakespeare's interest in theatre.

But a seismic shift in the performing arts began to occur in the 1570s when the first permanent theatres were built in London. Watching plays quickly became a part of everyday life. It was a leisure activity shared by all levels of society,

from the aristocracy to the labouring classes; apprentices and merchants are recorded as taking afternoons off to see a play. In order to secure as much return business as possible, theatre companies changed the play they presented every day or two, returning to previously performed works weeks or months later. Mornings were spent in rehearsal, afternoons were used for performances. This meant that new plays were always in demand – perfect for a budding playwright like Shakespeare.

Considering that the new playhouses represented a major change in how entertainment was consumed by the masses, historians and archaeologists are able to investigate them surprisingly rarely. It's actually much easier to discover and excavate a Roman amphitheatre than it is a Tudor or Jacobean playhouse. "There were only ever a handful of these purpose-built playhouses out in the suburbs of London," explained Heather Knight from MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), "and often we are only able to excavate them partly."



The site of the theatre in progress, being excavated by MOLA

Drawing back the Curtain

Archaeologists have uncovered many objects that shed light on everyday life in the Curtain Theatre

Drinking flask

Ceramic drinking vessels, like this impressive example in the shape of a lion's head, were found all over the site. Some were found underneath the stage, some were found in the courtyard where the audience stood. The most likely explanation is that both actors and audience alike enjoyed a drink.



Money boxes

To stop members of staff pilfering the takings, entrance fees were put in ceramic money boxes and kept in a secure location – the box office – where they would be smashed to release the day's profits. It was a risky business to be in, but successful theatre companies could enjoy a decent income.



Clay pipes

Tobacco was introduced to Britain by Francis Drake in 1573 and its use quickly spread, illustrated by these clay pipes pulled from the Curtain. Drake's voyage also brought back the potato plant, although that was viewed with suspicion by the Tudors – unlike smoking tobacco, which was thought a healthy habit, they thought the potato was poisonous.



Gaming piece

This fish-shaped bone gaming piece was one of several games found in the Curtain, others included round stones from a child's game. Were they brought into the theatre to keep youngsters quiet during the performance, or were they used by the actors to stop boredom setting in between scenes?



Clay figurine

Tudor theatres were often ribald and bawdy places with customers stumbling in from the nearby taverns, so it's appropriate that the archaeologists dug this attractive little find from the dirt – it is a clay figurine showing Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, sitting astride a barrel.



Glass beads

Intricate beads made from glass were used for decoration on clothes and these examples may have been used by the actors to liven up the costumes they wore on stage. Although it's tempting to imagine these on the costumes of Romeo or Juliet, Shakespeare's company actually moved on around 20 years before the Curtain closed.



Uncovering Shakespeare's London

Archaeologists like Knight are trying to piece together exactly what these trailblazing playhouses looked like and what they can tell us about the development of performing arts during Shakespeare's time, but they are hindered by the remains often being incomplete.

The location of the first ever playhouse, known simply as The Theatre, was identified in Shoreditch in 2008 by MOLA. Their excavation of the walls of the playhouse revealed it to be polygonal, but the stage itself is thought to have been lost underneath modern housing. Not that much of the stage area would have remained anyway, because The Theatre was deliberately dismantled in 1599 so that the timbers and fittings could be used in the construction of another theatre: the Globe.

Modern visitors to Shakespeare's Globe, a reconstruction opened on the south bank in 1997, might think that they are viewing a replica of the original Globe in its heyday. It's actually a little more complicated than that. Little excavation of the original Globe site (which is 230 metres away from the reconstruction) has taken place, and the archaeologists would probably struggle to find much from the Shakespearean era. The original Globe burned down during a performance of *Henry VIII* in 1613; the single casualty of the fire was a man whose burning breeches were put out with a bottle of ale. The Globe was rebuilt, only for the second version to be closed and pulled down during the ascent of Puritanism in the 1640s.

Much of the evidence used to create the modern Shakespeare's Globe was taken from a different playhouse altogether, the Rose Theatre, which was discovered and excavated in 1989. This provided a blueprint to what we consider to be the typical playhouse of the era: a polygonal

building with an open-air, sloped yard in which customers watched the action on a thrust stage, which surrounded the performers on three sides. Excavations at the site of another playhouse, the Hope Theatre, have mirrored the findings at the Rose.

However, the recent discovery of another playhouse is questioning what we think we know about early theatres. This time, archaeologists had the chance to uncover the Curtain Theatre, one of the earliest London playhouses and a stage that Shakespeare will have known intimately.

"The Curtain is the fifth purpose-built playhouse that we have dug archaeologically," said Knight, who is the lead archaeologist in the Curtain excavation, "and it has the best remains of those five, so it is really adding to our understanding. The Rose Theatre had below-ground remains, but at the Curtain we have above-ground remains too."

Knight and her team of archaeologists have uncovered some fascinating objects that shed light on the everyday lives of both actors and audience, but they have also made discoveries that may rewrite the accepted history of Shakespearean playhouses.

Extensive documentary research by scholars had already discovered that the Curtain was built in Shoreditch in 1577, a few years before the Bard set foot in the capital. It was London's second playhouse, only postdating The Theatre. Little is known of the Curtain's early years, but by 1585 the owner, Henry Lanman, made an agreement with James Burbage, actor-manager of The Theatre, to use the Curtain as an 'easer' or supplementary playhouse to the more prestigious Theatre. When both were up and running, the total playhouse capacity of London was around 5,000 people.

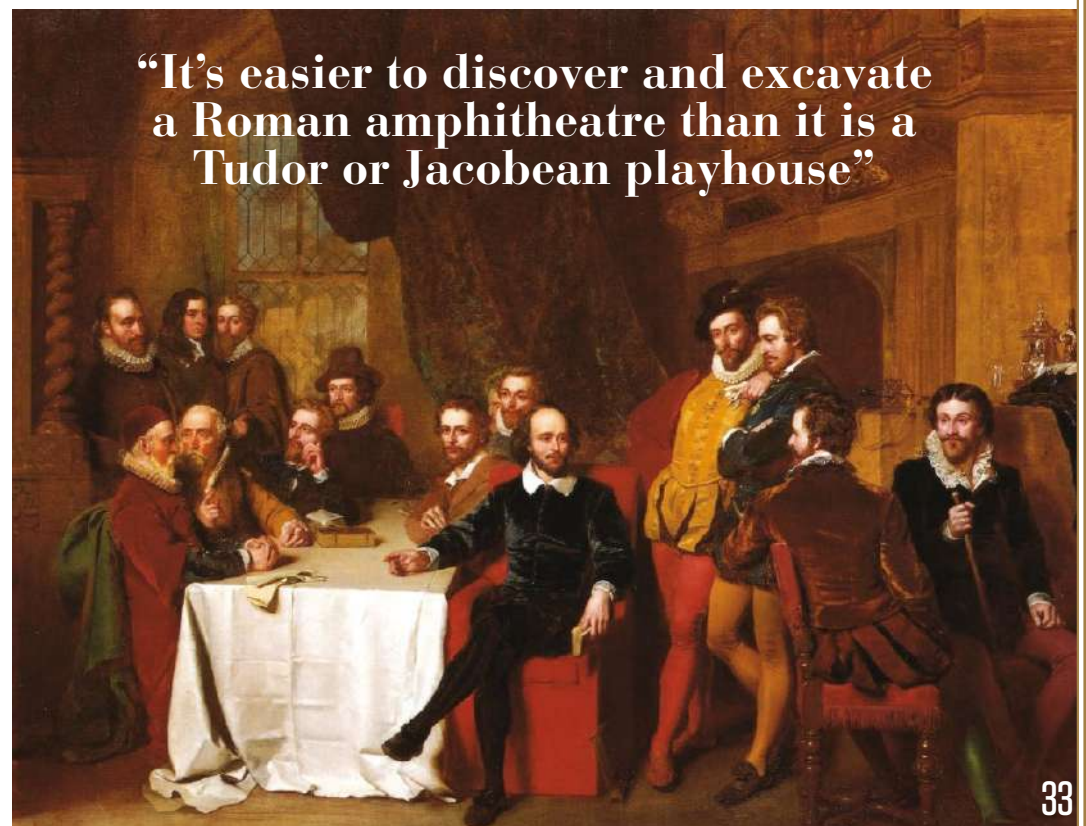


ABOVE: One key find from the dig is a 'bird whistle', perhaps for *Romeo And Juliet*

BELOW: Shakespeare and many of his most famous contemporaries



A vision of the London Shakespeare would have known



Book of London

We don't know exactly when Shakespeare arrived in London to seek his fortune - it was likely between 1585 and 1592 - but we do know that by 1594 he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company based at The Theatre. In 1597 Shakespeare and his band fell out with Giles Allen, owner of the land that The Theatre was built on. As a result the Lord Chamberlain's Men shifted their base less than 200 metres to the south and the Curtain became the new home of Shakespeare's works. Here several of his renowned plays were performed for the first time, including Shakespeare's most famous, *Romeo And Juliet*. However, the Lord Chamberlain's Men didn't just act the roles that Shakespeare wrote. While in residence at the Curtain they also performed Ben Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour*; in which Shakespeare played the role of Kno'well, an old man.

Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men spent two years at the Curtain, leaving in 1599 when the company built the Globe on the south bank of the Thames. The Curtain's most famous artiste may have moved on, but it continued as a playhouse for around 20 years. In 1604 it became the home theatre of a new company, the Queen



Anne's Men, but they moved on within a year or so to the Red Bull Theatre. Documentary records begin to tail off, although the Queen Anne's Men returned to the Curtain at least once.

After 1624, the last-known reference to a performance there, the Curtain disappeared into the mists of history. By the 21st century the Curtain was well and truly lost. Historians knew that it had been built close to its predecessor, The Theatre, but the exact location was unknown. "For a long time we didn't know what shape it was, exactly where it was, when it was built, who built it," Knight explained. "The Curtain is the least well documented of all of the London playhouses, the most absent from the historical record."

A clue to the Curtain's location lies in the name - the Curtain refers not to a stage curtain but a curtain wall marking the edge of the city. The Lord Mayor had decreed that plays could not be staged in the city itself due to a fear that playhouses would help spread disease. The only contemporary illustration thought to show the Curtain at the edge of the city was no help. It revealed an implausibly idyllic location with a horse wandering across a rolling meadow and



Archaeologists from MOLA at work on the Curtain Theatre site dig

“Mechanics must have unknowingly stood centimetres above where Shakespeare once performed”

a wooded hill in the background. In reality, this part of London was flat, even in Shakespeare's time, and rather than the meadows and woods of the engraving, the city limits were a place where smelly and dirty industries like slaughter houses and tanneries congregated.

In 2012, when the streets of Shoreditch were scheduled for redevelopment, experts from MOLA were able to step in to explore the area in search of the Curtain. They uncovered two sections of the outer wall and, nearly four centuries after it disappeared from the map, the exact location and size of the theatre was known again. As it happens, the theatre was just metres away from a plaque which marked the historians' best guess as to where it lay.

Even more excitingly, it appeared that the Curtain was remarkably preserved, especially considering that Shoreditch is no longer on the city limits. Shakespeare's London had a population of little more than 100,000; now it is far higher and Shoreditch is very much part of the inner city with all its construction and destruction. The Curtain's survival was probably down to the fact that, over 400 years, the land under which it was buried was largely used for open spaces including the back gardens of housing and the yard to the Horse and Groom pub. That some of the more modern building work missed the Tudor theatre was just down to pure luck: the mechanics who stood in an inspection pit to work on cars in the garage built over the Curtain in the 20th century must have unknowingly stood centimetres above where Shakespeare once performed.

Further redevelopment led to another excavation in 2016. Over a three-month dig during the autumn, archaeologists revisited the theatre

ahead of a substantial new building complex. The discoveries that they made may alter the accepted history of Shakespearean theatre.

The breakthrough began with the very shape of the theatre itself. One of the plays which premiered at the Curtain was *Henry V*, in which the chorus – possibly played by Shakespeare himself – proclaims “may we cram within this wooden O, the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?” Yet that line was probably rewritten after Shakespeare and his company moved to the Globe. The reason? The Curtain Theatre was not an O but a rectangular building, quite different to the Globe, Rose, Theatre and Hope playhouses.

Within this wooden rectangle archaeologists discovered a stage, which also differed from the norm for theatres of the time. Rather than a thrust stage such as that seen at the other playhouses, jutting out and surrounded on three sides by the audience, the Curtain's stage was more typical of that seen in modern theatres; a shoulder-high oblong, 14 metres wide and five metres deep. However, there was no backstage area. To aid access to and from the performance space a tunnel went underneath the stage with doors on each side of it – actors could leave from one side and reappear at the other without being seen by the audience.

“The stage poses questions,” said Knight. “How did the shape of the stage influence the performances? Were people like Shakespeare writing for the shape of the stage?”

Perhaps the unusual shape of the stage influenced the plays that Shakespeare wrote for performance at the Curtain. Were the battle scenes in *Henry V* improved by being able to include

Shakespeare the collaborator

To be or not to be a Shakespeare play – did the Bard co-write with any other authors?

The archaeologists excavating the Curtain are not the only ones attempting to shed new light on William Shakespeare. Scholars have also been closely examining the Shakespearean texts and have come to some astonishing conclusions. The title pages of some new editions of *Henry VI, Part One, Two and Three* will now credit William Shakespeare and his contemporary Christopher Marlowe as co-writers.

The argument over who authored Shakespeare's plays has been around for a long time. Conspiracy theorists have wallowed in the suggestion that Shakespeare was a total fraud and his plays were written by a committee, the Earl of Oxford, Francis Bacon or indeed Marlowe – including the fanciful suggestion that Marlowe faked his own murder in 1593 so he could carry on writing as Shakespeare.

However, publishers at Oxford University Press have decided to take the plunge on more scientific grounds. Their new editions will co-credit Marlowe for the three parts of *Henry VI* after a panel of experts deduced that complex statistical analysis of the writing can reveal who authored a particular work.

“Shakespeare-plus” words – gentle, answer, beseech, spoke and tonight – appear in Shakespeare's works more often than those of his contemporaries. On the other hand, “Shakespeare-minus” words are rarely used by the Bard. Comparing such word uses, and the combinations of words and phrases used, enable researchers to identify not just a particular writer, but whether a writer worked with a collaborator.

Although the 1634 edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* states that the play was written “by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher,” Shakespeare and his contemporaries were possibly far more collaborative in their approach to writing than we ever realised. *All's Well That Ends Well* is another classic piece on which Shakespeare may have received help – this time from Thomas Middleton.

However, the researchers suggest that new plays on which Shakespeare contributed should be added to his canon. *Arden Of Faversham* is now listed as a Shakespeare work – co-written with an anonymous aide, according to the experts – while the painter's scene in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* also probably came from Shakespeare's pen.



ABOVE: Possibly a portrait of Christopher Marlowe, who may have written *Henry VI* (it's complicated)

The Bard's city

Much of London was destroyed in the Great Fire, but a sense of the Bard remains at these sites

The Clink

In 1598, the time Shakespeare was performing at The Curtain, he lived in an area known as the Liberty of the Clink on the south bank of the Thames and would have walked past the notorious prison daily. Perhaps appropriately, Shakespeare can be traced there because a case of tax evasion that he was involved in was referred to the Bishop of Winchester, and the only place the Bishop had jurisdiction was in the Liberty.



ABOVE: Possibly one of, if not the oldest prison in Britain, the Clink is now open as a museum

London Bridge

The only bridge across the Thames in Shakespeare's time was London Bridge, although it was quite different to the modern bridge of the same name. The Tudor bridge was stone and held up to 200 buildings. The southern gatehouse was also used to display the severed heads of traitors, dipped in tar and impaled on spikes. In 1598, when Shakespeare would have used the bridge, a German visitor counted more than 30 heads.



ABOVE: Old London Bridge in a 1616 illustration - note the severed heads of executed traitors

Royal Exchange

Shakespeare would almost certainly have visited England's first shopping mall, the Royal Exchange on Threadneedle Street, which first opened for business in 1571. It was a huge arcaded building with banking facilities and more than 200 shops, allowing a playwright to buy the tools of his trade and a few luxuries including spices from around the world. Stockbrokers, however, were not allowed due to their rude manner.



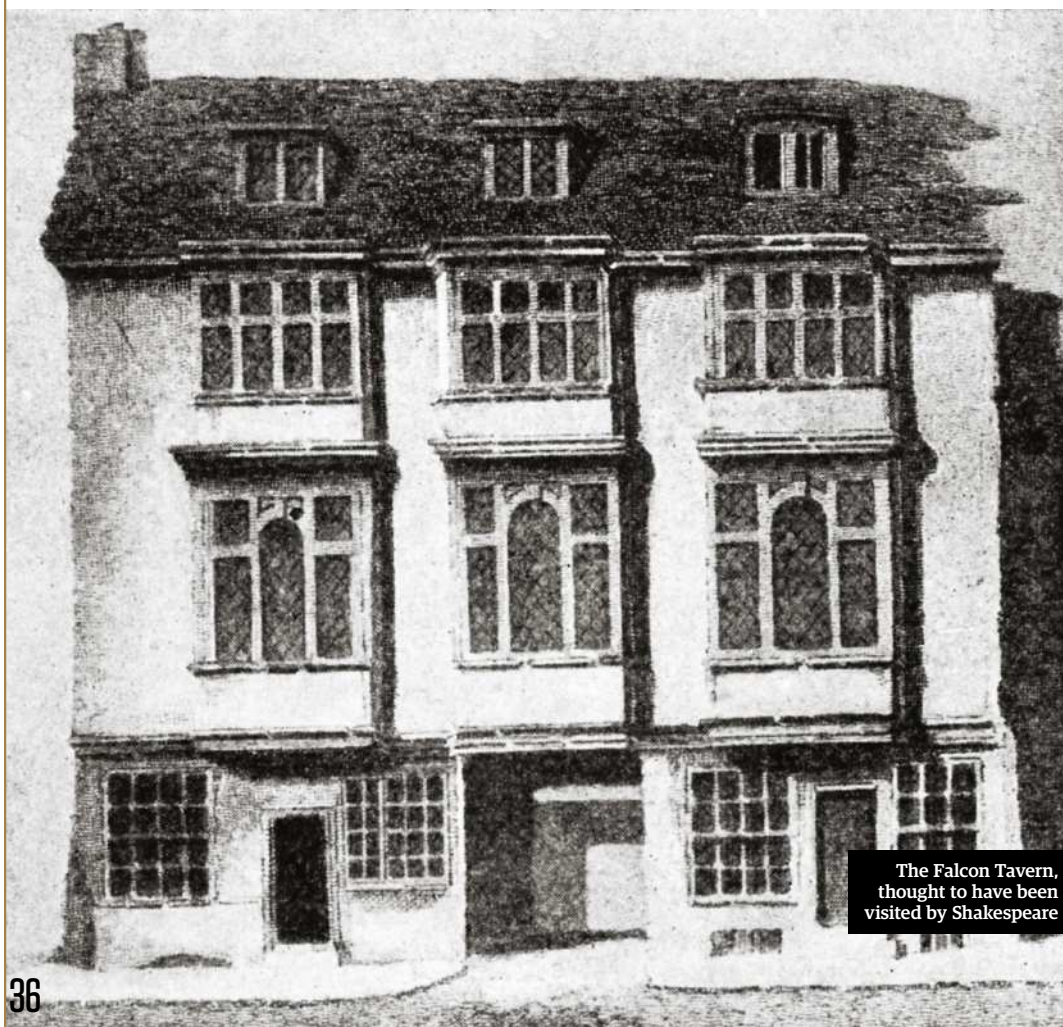
ABOVE: The modern Royal Exchange is the third incarnation, the first two having been destroyed by fire

Saint John's Gate

Originally the south entrance to the inner precinct of the Priory of the Knights of Saint John in Clerkenwell, during Shakespeare's time Saint John's Gate was the base of the Master of Revels. His office decided which plays could be performed and which would be censored - not always an honest task since it was common for the master to earn ten times his salary in bribes. Did any of Shakespeare's work vanish here?



ABOVE: Reclaimed by its monastic builders, Saint John's Gate now houses the Museum of the Order of Saint John



The Falcon Tavern, thought to have been visited by Shakespeare

more people on stage in a single scene? Was the balcony scene in *Romeo And Juliet* specifically designed for a stage which did not jut out into the audience? These are questions which will engage archaeologists, historians and scholars alike for some time.

The building and stage may have been unusual, but the audience stood in surroundings that would have been more familiar to the Elizabethan theatregoer. Those who bought the cheapest penny tickets for performances stood in a courtyard made from compacted gravel. It is popularly believed (although there is no evidence for it) that these groundlings threw things at characters they did not like. The groundlings would, however, have got wet when it rained - the courtyard was open to the elements. For those who didn't want to be packed in the pit, three covered, timber galleries offered places at a higher price.

We know that those who watched the plays paid for the privilege because the archaeologists at the Curtain discovered the tops of several ceramic pots in which the entrance fees were once collected. These pots were then taken away and stored in a separate office. Later, they were smashed so that the money could be counted. The place where the boxes were stored was called the box office, the origin of the term we still use today.

"The finials of the money pots are everybody's favourite find," revealed Knight. "They are quite a depositional signature of Elizabethan and



The archaeological site hidden behind tantalising barriers and signage

Uncovering Shakespeare's London

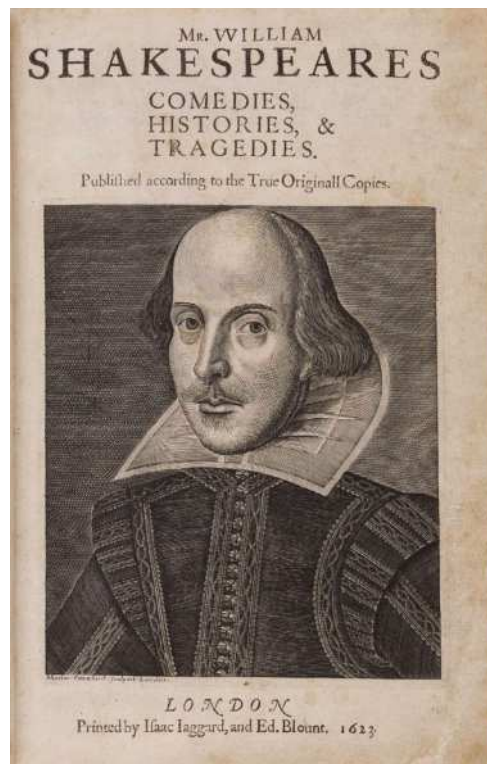


The Curtain could only be exposed when the land above it was redeveloped

“People could go to an inn, buy a drink and take in a performance but were under no obligation to give the performers any money”

Jacobean playhouses, you find them associated with places of entertainment. You get an understanding that these playhouses were commercial ventures through those objects. Before this period these companies were playing in yards. People could go to an inn, buy a drink and take in a performance but were under no obligation to give the performers any money. I guess it was like busking in a way. Having a purpose-built venue switches that relationship. All of a sudden the audience now have to pay to see a play.”

Other finds shed light on the individuals who both performed and watched at the Curtain. A ceramic pot has been identified by the archaeologists as a bird call, presumably used to set the scene. Glass beads and pins were dug from the soil which may have been used on the actors' costumes. Drinking vessels and clay pipes could have been used by both theatregoers and actors. And what of the children's games? Were they brought to keep a child quiet during the performance (not that it really mattered since theatre performances were often raucous affairs) or were they used by the actors to pass the time when they were off the stage between scenes and performances? The discoveries at the Curtain have added significantly to our knowledge



ABOVE: Title page from Shakespeare's *First Folio*, dating from 1623



Family portrait of the Shakespeares, dating from 19th century

of Shakespeare's theatres, but plenty of questions remain. In particular, was the unusual shape of the building and stage a one-off experiment, or was it actually copied by any other London playhouses?

“We started off with a set of research questions, wanting to know how the Curtain could change our understanding of the development of early modern drama,” said Knight. “But the amount of new questions that the archaeology has thrown up is going to keep us very busy for quite a while”

Scholars will continue to examine the results and the debate will no doubt go on. Meanwhile the remains of the Curtain have been carefully covered by a protective membrane and special pH-neutral sand while a new 40-storey residential, office and retail complex is built, which will include a visitor centre displaying the excavated finds. Shakespeare lived and worked in this busy corner of East London, so it's fitting that, even 400 years later, the Curtain Theatre will once again help make these streets a vibrant and thriving area.

A selection of characters from the plays of Shakespeare





TOWER OF LONDON

See where the conspirators were kept before being executed. Also in the Tower is a marble memorial with all the names involved in the Gunpowder Plot along with those who interrogated them.

5/11 Gunpowder Plot

Everyone remembers the fifth of November, but the true story of the men who plotted the gunpowder treason is often forgotten

When Queen Elizabeth I drew her last breath on her mammoth 44-year-long reign, Catholics around England let out their own sighs of relief. Life under Elizabeth had not been easy. Perhaps in retaliation to the brutal rule of her sister Mary, the devout Catholic queen, Elizabeth had introduced a range of legislations that hit Catholics hard. She was likely fearful of Catholics, and she had reason to be, as a Papal Bull declared that a Catholic's allegiance was not to the Crown, but to God. In one swift move, every Catholic in England was branded a traitor. Simply being a Catholic, or even sheltering Catholics, was not only illegal but akin to high treason. Terrified, but devoted to their faith, Catholics were forced underground and some 130 priests were executed. As the queen aged, many of the people who had suffered most under her reign began to hope for a successor who would be more sympathetic to their plight.

Considering how much was at stake, the crown passed to its next bearer incredibly smoothly. James I was the grandson of Henry VIII's sister, Margaret, Queen of Scots, and although he was a Protestant, his mother had been

a devout Catholic. For the struggling Catholics, King James's early acts to relax the fines that they suffered were very encouraging. However, this joy quickly turned sour. Realising how the fines filled up the treasury, James reinstated them and openly damned the Catholic faith. The hopes of many Catholics were crushed, and for some, this was the final straw.

If one man had felt the bitter sting of anti-Catholicism in England, it was Robert Catesby. A man from an illustrious family line that stretched back to William Catesby, trusted adviser of Richard III, his entire life he had watched his family's wealth be chipped away by harsh fines. When Catesby was only eight years old, he witnessed his father arrested and tried for harbouring a priest. For the remainder of his young years, his father was constantly in and out of prison. Catesby was tall, handsome and gifted, but he had been forced to drop out of his studies, as obtaining his degree required him to take the oath of supremacy, which swore allegiance to the queen and the Church of England. The Protestant monarchy had taken everything in Catesby's life: his childhood, his father, his fortune and his future.

Catholic Crime & Punishment

Life for Catholics was anything but easy under the Protestant monarchs

Crime

Punishment

Not attending Anglican service

Initially fined 12 shillings, then raised to £20 per month

Attending a private Catholic mass

Imprisonment

Not paying fines

Imprisonment

Fleeing abroad for longer than six months without permission

Forfeit the profits of lands and all goods

Being a Catholic priest

Death

Refusing to accept the monarch as head of the Church

Imprisonment and death

Reconciling any person to the Catholic church

Death

Catesby possessed not only good looks, but also a generous and affable nature, and as a result, he had amassed a large and powerful circle of friends. His allegiance to the Catholic faith was no secret, and he had taken part in a previous rebellion. When Elizabeth fell ill in 1596, Catesby was arrested simply because the government feared he would take advantage of the situation and organise an uprising. Catesby's experiences typified the lives of all Catholics of the time; he was the beating heart of the Catholic struggle, and he was rich and influential enough to actually do something about it.

Catesby had a plan. Killing the king was not enough; Elizabeth's demise had proved that the death of a monarch did not ensure change. The status quo was against him, so the status quo needed to change. To do this, he would blast it to smithereens. In February 1604, Catesby invited Thomas Wintour and John Wright to his house. Wintour, Catesby's cousin, had also felt the sting of anti-Catholicism as his own uncle had been executed for being a priest. Wright was an old friend of Catesby's and had taken part in a rebellion against Elizabeth. In his house in Lambeth, Catesby revealed his grand plan - he would re-establish Catholicism by blowing up the House of Lords during the opening of Parliament. Not only would the king be present, but also the most powerful Protestants in the land. The attack would produce a power vacuum, and the Catholics would be poised to fill it.

Understandably, Wintour was shocked by his cousin's plans. He was quick to argue that, should they fail, it would put back their cause several years. Catesby responded: "The nature of the disease requires so sharp a remedy." He launched into an impassioned speech about the righteousness of his cause, and how Parliament was the perfect target as "in that place they have done us all the mischief." Catesby's natural charisma quickly won around his cousin, who pledged his loyalty and life to the impassioned leader.

Catesby had recruited his first co-conspirators, and more were to follow. Seeking support from the Catholic Spain, Wintour travelled to Flanders. Although he struggled to obtain Spanish support, while there he sought out the man who was fated to become the face of the gunpowder plot - Guy Fawkes. Fawkes had made his Catholic allegiance very clear by fighting on the side of Spain during the Eighty Years' War and had been attempting to drum up support in the country. He was tall, well built with a mop of thick red-brown hair, and he was also determined, driven and skilled in all matters of war. However, there was one of Fawkes's talents that attracted Catesby in particular - his proficiency and knowledge of gunpowder.



Four of the plotters were killed on 30 January, and the other four executed the following day

"The status quo needed to change. To do this, he would blast it to smithereens"

When the men met again at the Duck and Drake Inn, they had drafted another conspirator, Thomas Percy, a dear friend of Catesby's. Percy had a reputation as a wild and rebellious youth. He had attempted to build a strong relationship with James I for the good of his religion, but now felt the bitter sting of

betrayal. Percy, on a previous occasion, had to be stopped by Catesby from storming into the palace and taking down the king single handedly. Together, these five passionate and wronged men met in the Catholic safe house and Catesby outlined the plan. Percy's support was almost a given, and he proclaimed: "Shall we always, gentlemen, talk and never do anything?" Swayed either by their enigmatic leader or their own hatred of Protestants, the five men swore an oath of secrecy upon a bible and received the Holy Communion from a priest secretly celebrating mass, completely unaware that the men were planning regicide.

A royal warrant suggested that if 'gentler tortures' proved fruitless Guy Fawkes should be racked





Turbulent times

In the years following Henry VIII's break from Rome, the religion of the reigning monarch swung from Protestant to Catholic, with devastating effects for their subjects



Henry VIII



Edward VI



Lady Jane Grey



Mary I



Elizabeth I



James VI and I



Cromwell



Charles I



Charles II



James II



William III

The conspirators

Each with his own motive for treason

Thomas Bates

1567-1606

Role: Catesby's servant
Born in Warwickshire, Bates was employed as Catesby's servant and was seen as a hard-working and loyal man. Due to his close proximity to Catesby, he became suspicious of his unusual activity and was invited into the plot. He became a useful accomplice – as an ordinary man he could perform many actions without arousing suspicion.

Robert Wintour

1568-1606

Role: Financial support
The oldest Wintour brother, Robert inherited the majority of his father's estate, including Huddington Court. Through marriage, Robert aligned himself to a strong Catholic family, and his home became a refuge for priests.

Christopher Wright

1570-1605

Role: Conspirator
The younger of the Wright brothers, Christopher was described as taller, fatter and fairer than John. A private and discreet man, since his conversion he was fully committed to the Catholic faith, and took part in the same rebellion as his brother and Catesby.

John Wright

1568-1605

Role: Original conspirator
The older of the two Wright brothers, John was a school friend of Guy Fawkes and was thrown in prison for taking part in rebellions. With a reputation as a brave, loyal and skilled swordsman, he converted to Catholicism and became associated with Catesby.



Thomas Percy

1560-1605

Role: Logistics

Percy had a reputation as a wild youth, having possibly abandoned his wife and killed a Scotsman in a skirmish. When Percy converted to Catholicism, it helped to calm some of his more rebellious ways, funnelling his fiery nature into bettering the Catholic cause in England.

Guy Fawkes

1570-1606

Role: Explosives expert

Born in York, Fawkes lost his father at a young age, and when his mother married a Catholic, he converted to the faith. He fought for Spain in the Eighty Years' War, and adopted the Italian form of his name 'Guido'. He was furiously opposed to James I, describing him and all of Scotland as heretics.

Robert Catesby

1573-1605

Role: Leader

The only surviving son of Sir William Catesby, Robert Catesby gained a reputation as a Catholic sympathiser after taking part in a rebellion in hopes of usurping the queen. Desperate to reclaim Catholic power, Catesby concocted a plot that would require the co-operation of only a few trusted men but was capable of destroying Protestant power in England.

Thomas Wintour

1571-1606

Role: Original co-conspirator

Thomas Wintour was intelligent, witty and well educated. He fought against Catholic Spain, but his views quickly changed and he became a faithful Catholic. Thomas travelled to Spain in an attempt to drum up support, also known as the Spanish treason, but his success was lacking and he was driven to other, more drastic methods.



Book of London

With his first co-conspirators in place, Catesby sprung into action. The opening of Parliament had been postponed until 5 November the following year due to plague. This gave him time to prepare everything. Initially, Catesby figured the best way to get the gunpowder beneath the House of Lords would be to dig a tunnel, but the men soon realised a far safer way was to lease one of the storerooms that lay beneath. Luckily, Percy had a business in London, so could easily lease a storeroom without attracting suspicion. Explosives expert Guy Fawkes posed as John Johnson, Percy's servant, and was placed in the premises. The conspirators stored the gunpowder in Catesby's house and ferried it across the Thames into the dwelling under the cover of darkness.

Steadily, more and more men were drafted into the conspiracy, as it proved impossible for five men alone to handle such grand plans. Catesby's servant, Bates, became suspicious, and his master had no option but to recruit him. Robert Keyes,

Robert Wintour, John Grant and Christopher Wright were also all inducted. Not only were they all passionate Catholics, but many possessed large fortunes and manor houses that would certainly aid the cause.

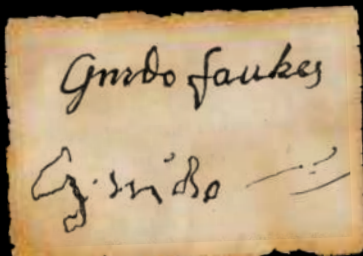
Secretly, Catesby was worried. He wasn't a terrorist motivated by blind revenge, he was a moral and religious man, and wanted to be sure that what he was doing was right. Struggling with his conscience, he repeatedly visited two priests, Father Henry Garnet and Oswald Tesimond. Catesby had no doubts that the king was guilty, but worried about the innocent people who would inevitably be killed in the blast. He asked if this could be excused: was it okay to kill innocents for the greater good? Sworn to the law of

confession, Garnet could tell no one of Catesby's plot, but he attempted to dissuade him.

Despite the priests' warnings, Catesby continued bringing gunpowder into the storage hold. He also began to make plans for the second part of

their scheme. Eager to maintain some order after the king's death, he decided that James's child, Princess Elizabeth, would be put in place as his successor. At only eight years old he believed she could be moulded into the figurehead they desired. Elizabeth was also located not in London but in Coombe Abbey near Coventry. In order to make sure this final stage went off without a hitch, Catesby recruited his final three conspirators, Ambrose Rookwood, Everard Digby and Francis Tresham.

By October, everything was in place. Fawkes would remain in London and light the fuse, before escaping the city and travelling to Europe to drum up support. Meanwhile, in the subsequent madness, a revolt would break out in the Midlands and Elizabeth would be captured. Catesby seemed to have recovered from his earlier concern, but the same could not be said of his co-conspirators. A number of the men had friends in Parliament who were fellow Catholics. Late in the evening on 26 October, a letter arrived at the house of one of these fellow Catholics: Lord Monteagle, a man who had, in his youth, played a part in a fair number of Catholic plots himself. The contents of the letter were shocking. It warned him to abstain



Guy Fawkes's signature before torture (top) and after (bottom)



James I described Guy Fawkes as possessing "a Roman resolution"



The men at Holbeach House were stripped of their clothes and possessions before being taken to prison

A plot unravels

As the plot was uncovered, the men fled their separate ways, clinging to the hope of a revolution

Evening 4 November Westminster

Catesby, John Wright and Bates decide that the plot will go ahead, despite the discovery that a warning letter was sent to Monteagle, and begin setting out towards the Midlands.

Night 4 November Parliament vaults

The king's men search the vaults under Parliament. They stumble upon Fawkes standing by a pile of wood, who informs them his name is John Johnson, and that he works for Thomas Percy.

Late night 4 November Parliament vaults

Under the king's orders, the men return to the vault and find Fawkes dressed ready for a getaway. He is immediately arrested, and taken to the king in the early hours of 5 November.

Morning 5 November Westminster

Christopher Wright learns of the plot's discovery and rushes to the Duck and Drake Inn to inform Thomas Wintour. Wintour warns those still in London - Percy, Keyes and Rookwood.

Midday 5 November Near Milton Keynes

Rookwood rides furiously for two hours and manages to catch up with Catesby and the others to warn them of the plot's failure and Fawkes's arrest. They decide to continue on to Dunchurch.

6pm 5 November Ashby St Ledgers

The six fleeing conspirators meet up with Robert Wintour, then continue on and meet with Digby, who is accompanied by a hunting party. They continue west to Warwick.

The Gunpowder Plot

from attending Parliament on 5 November, as "they shall receive a terrible blow, this Parliament." Very aware of how serious this threat could be, Monteagle alerted the Earl of Salisbury.

News of the letter quickly found its way back to Catesby, and Tresham was immediately suspected, as Monteagle was his brother-in-law. Catesby and Thomas Wintour furiously confronted the new recruit, threatening to hang him for his idiocy, but Tresham was able to convince his fiery leader of his innocence. However, Catesby was unwilling to listen to Tresham's urges to abandon the plot - he was too committed. Risks be damned, the plot would go ahead as planned.

Meanwhile, the king had learned of the mysterious letter. Unlike many of his advisers, he took the warning very seriously. However, he decided to bide his time until the night in question, and see if the conspirators would carry out their alleged plot. When 4 November dawned, both the king and Catesby leapt into action. Catesby, with John Wright and Bates, left for the Midlands to launch the second part of the plan, while Fawkes prepared for his pivotal part.

The king was preparing too. James's men were searching all the buildings around Parliament for

signs of anything suspicious. It was in the cellar during one of these searches that they stumbled upon Fawkes. Dressed as a serving man, he stood before a large, suspicious pile of firewood. He explained that he was a servant of Percy, though came across rather desperate. Apprehensive but not willing to upset him further, the men left to report their findings to the king. As soon as James heard Percy's name, he was suspicious, and ordered another search of the cellar.

When the men returned, Fawkes was still there. Dressed in his hat, cape and spurs, ready for a quick getaway, he was arrested and searched. Although he stuck to his story and insisted his name was John Johnson, they discovered matches and touchwood on his person. The king's men inspected the firewood and uncovered 36 barrels of gunpowder, enough to blow the houses of Parliament sky high.

Everything now rested with Fawkes. The plot had failed, that much was obvious, but if he held out long enough, the lives of his friends could be saved. As Fawkes was questioned, he displayed remarkable courage in the face of almost certain death. He stuck by his story that he was indeed John Johnson. However, he did not for a moment



After his arrest, Fawkes was imprisoned in the Tower of London

"Killing the king was a step too far; even his fellow Catholics had deserted him"



Morning 6 November Warwick Castle

Catesby and his men raid the castle for supplies, arming themselves for the fight they believe will follow, before continuing to Norbrook where they pick up more weapons.

Afternoon 6 November Huddington

The conspirators arrive in Huddington and meet with Thomas Wintour. Despite Catesby's hopes, nobody is willing to ally with them, and they are forced to continue alone.

Evening 6 November London

The Lord Chief Justice questions Rookwood's servants and uncovers the identity of several of the men involved, including Catesby, Rookwood and Wintour.

Evening 6 November Tower of London

With Guy Fawkes's resolve still holding, James permits the use of torture to loosen his tongue. He orders that 'gentler tortures' are used first.

Night 7 November Tower of London

After enduring the horrors of the rack, Guy Fawkes finally confesses the details of the plot as well as the names of his fellow co-conspirators.

Night 7 November Holbeach House

The fugitives arrive at Holbeach House. They spread out their damp gunpowder before a fire and many of them are set alight. Some of the men choose to leave.

Morning 8 November Holbeach House

200 men led by the Sheriff of Worcestershire besiege Holbeach House. In the gunfight, Catesby, Percy and the Wright brothers are killed. The others are arrested.

The Gunpowder conspiracy

Was the plot really a state conspiracy?



The mystery Much of the suspicion surrounding the plot has involved, in some part, the role of the Earl of Salisbury. It was Salisbury who Monteagle alerted upon receiving the letter, and his peculiar actions have prompted many to ponder if he had more knowledge of the plot than he let on. First of all, he failed to immediately inform the king of the plot, who was out hunting and did not return for several days. Salisbury's involvement in the plot actually began before the letter even arrived, as he was aware that something was being planned. When the king did learn of the letter, Salisbury denied this knowledge completely, and allowed the king to take full credit. This may have been a clever political play, but perhaps it hints at more.

The motive The foiling of the plot benefited the king immensely. The feeling of goodwill towards the monarch encouraged Parliament to grant astonishingly high subsidies for the king, and the thanks for this lay at Salisbury's feat. An ambitious man, Salisbury expertly exploited the situation to garner favour with the monarch, and also allowed him to introduce more anti-Catholic legislation. Salisbury's anti-Catholic feelings far outstripped the monarch's, and he wished to rid England of the religion once and for all.

His involvement Conspiracy theorists summarise that Salisbury may have invented the entire plot himself, targeting known Catholic agitators and penning the letter to Monteagle. Others argue that instead of inventing it, Salisbury infiltrated the plot far earlier than the letter reveal, and simply allowed it to continue, knowing that he could use it later to fuel the fire of anti-Catholicism.

Evidence The ease in which the conspirators conducted the plot is the main evidence here. The fact that they were able to get 36 barrels of gunpowder in a country where gunpowder was strictly controlled by the government and store them under the Houses of Parliament would have been very difficult. However, the lack of any other evidence makes this conspiracy impossible to prove. If Salisbury invented the plot, it is unlikely all the men would have confessed to the crime, knowing that death would be the result. The more likely conclusion is that Salisbury was a quick-thinking opportunist, who, upon uncovering the truth, exploited the situation for all that it was worth.

deny his intentions, proclaiming that it was his plan to destroy the king and Parliament. When asked for the names of his accomplices, he was insistent he acted alone. James was impressed by Fawkes's resilience, but he needed names, and if torture would loosen his tongue, so be it.

News of Fawkes's arrest quickly spread to the other conspirators. The men who remained in London fled. Percy, aware that

his name would be linked to the crime, proclaimed: "I am undone!" Rookwood, an exceptional rider, furiously rode in Catesby's direction to warn him. His incredible ride saw him travel 30 miles in just two hours. He arrived breathlessly at Catesby's side and informed him of the plot's uncovering.

Catesby was crushed. He had poured everything into this revolution and was absolutely desperate to cling onto any hope that he could find. He proclaimed that he could still gather enough support for an armed uprising. He knew enough resentful Catholics for an insurrection, and one way or another he would have his rebellion. The plotters could have left. There was enough time for them to flee England with their lives, but their commitment to their passionate leader and their

belief in the cause was so great that they remained by his side.

The men continued on to the Midlands, but the support Catesby had promised did not come. Word of the treasonous plot had spread rapidly through the country, faster than the men could travel, and even friends and families turned them away. Catesby had fatally misjudged the situation.

Killing the king was a step too far; even his fellow Catholics had deserted him. Wet, miserable and dejected, when the men finally reached their safe house of Holbeach House in Staffordshire, they spread out their gunpowder in front of a fire to dry it off. A spark ignited it, and engulfed Catesby, Rookwood and Grant in flames.

Meanwhile, in London, the king's men were steadily breaking Fawkes' steely resolve. He was placed upside down

in manacles and hung from a wall, and most likely strapped to the rack, his limbs agonisingly dislocated. By 7 November, what remained of Fawkes's resolve had crumbled. Broken and drained, he confessed the details of the plot and the names of all his co-conspirators.

Catesby was alive, but for some the explosion was a grim sign and their commitment to their

"Before the trials even began, the verdict was a foregone conclusion"

People lit bonfires as soon as the news of the plot spread to celebrate the king's survival



Fawkes's legacy

The link between the gunpowder plot and bonfires was created almost immediately. While Fawkes was still subject to interrogations on 5 November, people around London lit bonfires in celebration of their monarch's escape. These fiery pyres spread all across the country as the news travelled, and instantly became part of the tradition. The king introduced an act declaring that all his people had to attend a thanksgiving service to celebrate his survival. This annual service continued until 1859, cementing the Gunpowder Plot in the nation's memory. Even in 1647, when all feast days were abolished, the 5 November celebration remained in place. Bonfire night took on a new form in the 18th century, with people burning effigies of the pope and treating it as a general anti-Catholic event. As Fawkes's association with the plot grew, people began to burn effigies of Fawkes instead, a tradition that continues to this day. However, the religious overtones have been all but extinguished.

leader finally waned. Gradually, the team began to unravel. Digby headed for the authorities; Bates, Littleton and Robert Wintour also made their escape. Eventually, all who remained were Catesby, Percy, Thomas Wintour, the Wright brothers, a wounded Rookwood, and Grant, who had been blinded by the fire. Miserable and broken, when the 200 armed government men descended on the group on 8 November, the fugitives had no hope of mounting a defence.

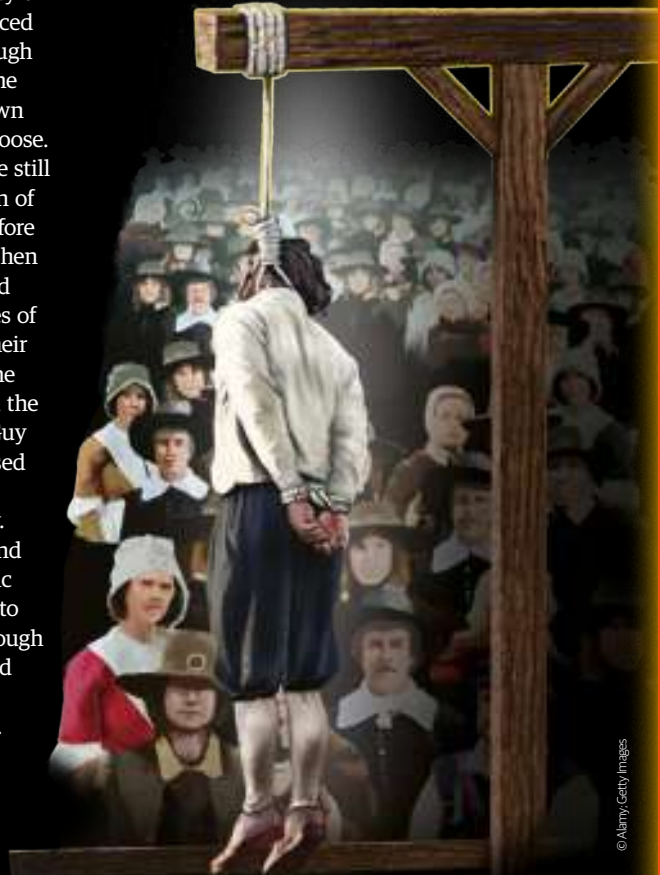
The fight was brief: Wintour was shot first followed by the Wright brothers and Rookwood. Catesby and Percy managed to summon the last embers of their fiery zeal and made a final stand together at the door. When they fell, it was as one, by a single bullet. On the edge of death and bleeding out, Catesby used his final ounce of strength to drag himself to a photo of the Virgin Mary, and cradling it in his arms, breathed his last.

The men who died at the house - Catesby, Percy and the Wright brothers - were lucky. Those who remained were rounded up, arrested and thrown in prison. Under threat of torture, all of the men admitted their involvement in the plot. Before the trials even began, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. The men were paraded up and jeered at by a furious audience. The conspirators had no defence, so could only utter their own pleas for mercy. Rookwood spoke for all the men when he said he was "neither actor nor author," and had acted out of blind devotion to their ringleader - Catesby, "whom he loved above any worldly man."

The people didn't care how charismatic their leader was. They wanted blood, and they were going to get it. The men were declared guilty of treason, and on 30 January, the first four faced their punishment. They were dragged through the street strapped to a wooden panel on the back of a horse. The men were stripped down to their shirts and their heads placed in a noose. They were briefly hung, but cut down while still breathing so they could experience the pain of having their genitals cut off and burned before their eyes. The bowels and the heart were then removed, and the bodies cut into pieces and displayed for the birds to pick at. The bodies of Catesby and Percy were decapitated, and their heads exhibited as a grim warning. Only one man, the final to face punishment, escaped the pain of castration and disembowelment - Guy Fawkes, broken and barely able to stand, used his final ounce of strength to leap from the gallows and break his neck, dying instantly.

The plan had been a disastrous failure, and the unearthing of such a dangerous Catholic plot that almost ended in tragedy did little to help the lives of Catholics in England. Although James was quick to make it clear that he did not blame all Catholics in his nation, strict laws against them were soon implemented. True Catholic emancipation would take a further 200 years, and the men who had schemed, fought and died for it would live on only in legend and rhyme.

Fawkes avoided the quartering part of his sentence by throwing himself off the gallows



The Palace of Westminster

Known as the 'Mother of Parliaments', Westminster's iconic architecture is recognised throughout the world

The Palace of Westminster was established by King Canute in the early-11th century and much expanded by Edward the Confessor after his coronation in 1042. After the Norman Conquest, William I adopted Westminster to help validate his new regime and his son, William Rufus, built the great hall (Westminster Hall). At the time of its construction, this hall was the largest of its kind in Europe and remains so to this day.

Under King Henry III Westminster became increasingly important as a central hub of royal power. He had a set of splendid apartments built which included the Painted Chamber, an enormous rectangular room which housed the monarch's state bed. The bedroom's decoration was so detailed that it took over 60 years to paint. Although much degraded and damaged over the centuries, the Painted Chamber survived for more than 600 years until it was demolished in the catastrophic fire of 1834.

The medieval palace's other focal point was the magnificent St Stephen's Chapel. First mentioned in 1184, it was rebuilt by Edward I in the mid-13th century to rival the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, before being remodelled by Edward III. It was finally completed in 1363. Thought to be the first building constructed in the English Perpendicular Gothic style, the chapel was served by the canons of St Stephen's College. Westminster remained the English monarchy's principal royal residence throughout the medieval period until 1512, when Henry VIII abandoned it in favour of the nearby Palace of Whitehall.

Parliament in progress

We pick just a few of the notable dates in the Palace of Westminster's long history

c.1016

● **Foundations laid**
King Canute builds a royal residence on Thorney Island, a former islet (or eyot) in the River Thames.

1097-9

● **Westminster Hall erected**
William II - the son of William the Conqueror - builds Westminster Hall over three years.

1292

● **Chapel remodelled**
King Edward I begins rebuilding St Stephen's Chapel located next to Westminster Hall.

1367

● **Time for a tower**
Edward III (right) constructs Westminster's first clock tower in New Palace Yard.

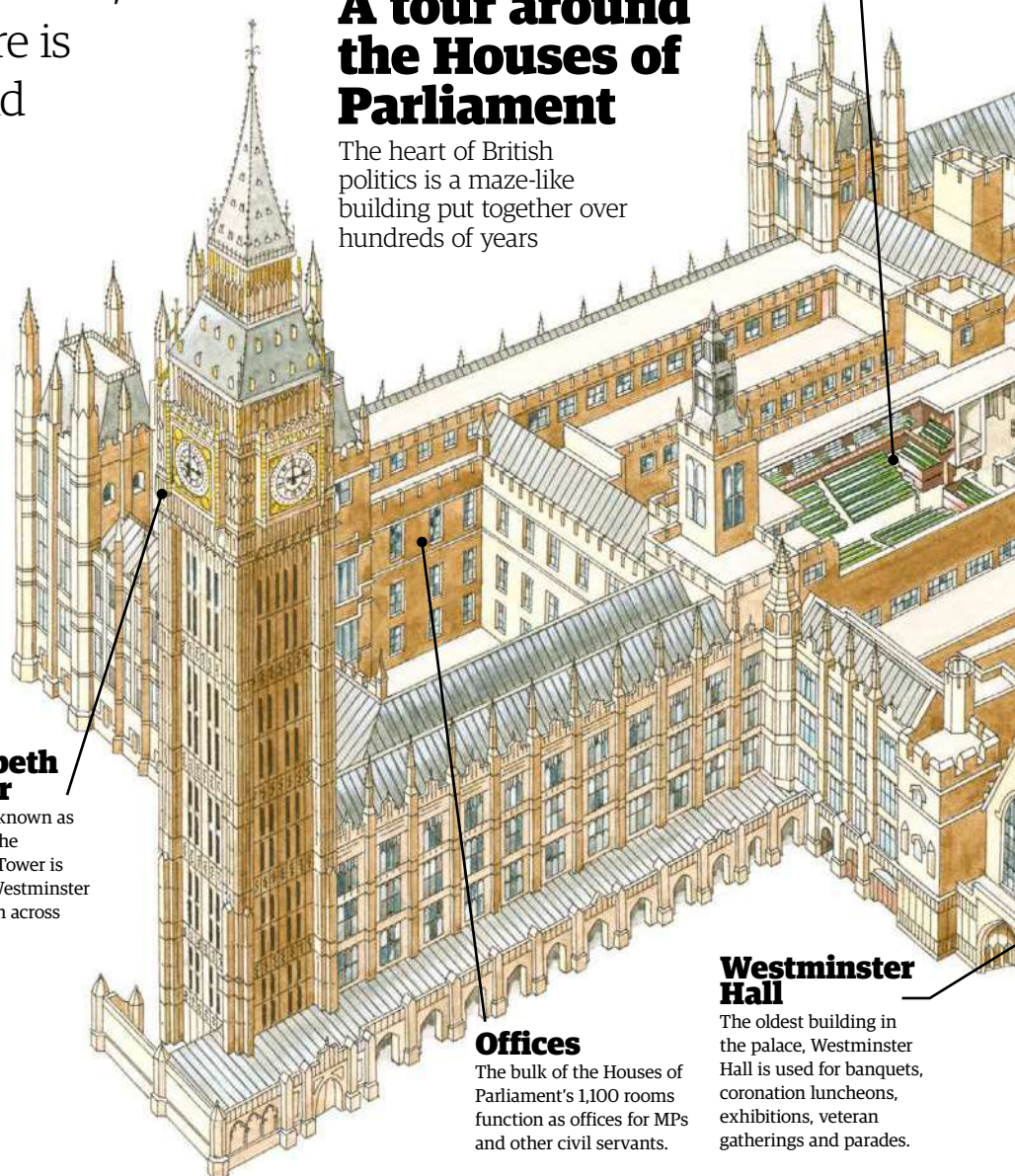


Central Lobby
Located beneath the Central Tower, this lobby is at the heart of the palace, linking the two houses' chambers and Westminster Hall.

Commons Chamber
Rebuilt after WWII, the Commons Chamber is famous for its green upholstery - a custom dating back 300 years.

A tour around the Houses of Parliament

The heart of British politics is a maze-like building put together over hundreds of years



Elizabeth Tower

Popularly known as 'Big Ben', the Elizabeth Tower is iconic of Westminster and known across the globe.

Westminster Hall

The oldest building in the palace, Westminster Hall is used for banquets, coronation luncheons, exhibitions, veteran gatherings and parades.

Offices

The bulk of the Houses of Parliament's 1,100 rooms function as offices for MPs and other civil servants.

The Palace of Westminster

Central Tower

At the palace's centre, the Central Tower contains the world's largest octagonal Gothic vault not supported by a central column.

Lords Chamber

The most lavishly decorated room in the palace, the Lords Chamber is upholstered in red and houses the royal throne.

Victoria Tower

Named after Queen Victoria, at 98.5m (325ft) high, it was for many years the tallest square stone tower on the planet.

Big Ben in focus

The world-famous clock tower of Westminster

Although the name 'Big Ben' is often used to describe Westminster's clock tower, it is actually called the Elizabeth Tower. While the bell is officially called the Great Bell of Westminster, it's generally referred to as Big Ben - a nickname of uncertain origin now known all over the world. The Elizabeth Tower was designed by the architect Augustus Pugin and completed in 1859; it contains 11 floors and there are 334 steps to the belfry. The belfry houses the Great Clock of Westminster, built by Edward John Dent and his sons. Striking the hour to within a second of the time, the Great Clock has remained reliable since it entered service in 1859. The time is shown on four dials, each seven metres (23 feet) in diameter, which are made of opalescent milk glass and can be lit from behind at night. The hour hand is 2.7 metres (8.9 feet) long, while the minute hand measures 4.2 metres (13.7 feet). The Great Clock started ticking on 31 May 1859, with the Great Bell's strikes heard for the first time on 11 July the same year. The Great Bell weighs 13.7 tons, is 2.2 metres (7.2 feet) in height and produces the note 'E' when tolled.

Big Ben is fixed and struck by hammers from outside rather than swinging and being struck from inside by clappers. There are four other bells in the belfry and, when rung together, they produce the 'Westminster chimes'.

Robing Room

In this room the sovereign dons the Imperial State Crown and ceremonial robes before making their way to the House of Lords.

Royal Gallery

Used for important occasions including receptions, dinners and ceremonies, this gallery also houses enormous paintings and royal portraits.

Richard the Lionheart

In WWII this statue had its sword bent by an exploding German bomb - it remained bent during the war as a symbol of resistance.

Chapel of St Mary Undercroft

First built by King Edward I in 1297, the chapel is located below St Stephen's Hall and is chiefly used by members of both houses for weddings and christenings.

St Stephen's Hall

St Stephen's Hall stands on the site of the royal Chapel of St Stephen's.

1394-99

Westminster Hall rebuilt

Richard II rebuilds Westminster Hall in its present form.



1512

Parliament arrives

The palace becomes the permanent residence for the English parliament.

1547

Edward VI's gift

Henry VIII's son Edward VI gives St Stephen's Chapel to the Commons after the dissolution of the college.

1605

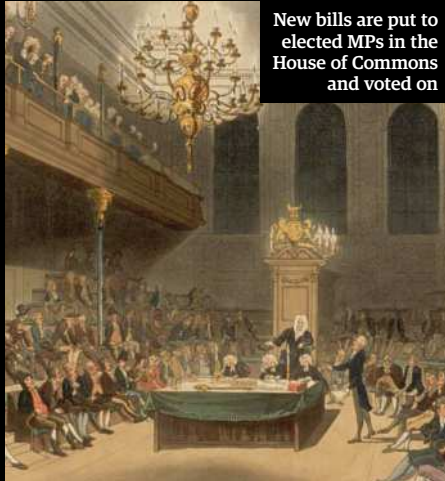
Gunpowder Plot

Guy Fawkes and fellow conspirators try to blow up the House of Lords, but Fawkes is caught red-handed.

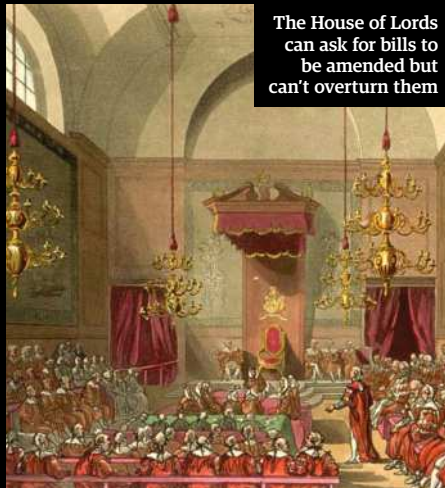


The two-house system

The Westminster parliament comprises two 'houses': the House of Commons (the lower house), consisting of 650 members (MPs) elected by their constituencies, and the House of Lords (the upper house), consisting of life peers, hereditary peers and Lords Spiritual (bishops of the Church of England). At present the House of Lords has 775 members. The purpose of parliament is to govern the country in the monarch's name and this falls to the largest party in the Commons (or a coalition of parties as at present). Legislation once passed by the Commons goes on to the Lords. The upper house can scrutinise and delay legislation, but since the Parliament Act of 1911, the Lords cannot reject it. The government is primarily responsible to the House of Commons and the prime minister stays in office only so long as he or she retains its support.



New bills are put to elected MPs in the House of Commons and voted on



The House of Lords can ask for bills to be amended but can't overturn them

In the Middle Ages parliament frequently met in Westminster Abbey's octagonal Chapter House – close to the Palace of Westminster – but in 1547 Edward VI closed St Stephen's College and gave the Commons the chapel as their permanent home. When the MPs moved in, they sat in the choir stalls and made speeches to each other across the chapel's central aisle. This arrangement may have encouraged the development of the two-party system of government versus opposition (see boxout) with which we are familiar today.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the medieval palace was gradually lost as various buildings were converted for new uses and its interiors redecorated. 'Improvements' were undertaken by architects such as Sir Christopher Wren, James Wyatt and Sir John Soane, which resulted in the palace gradually being transformed into a complex tangle of buildings. Then, on the night of 16 October 1834, a devastating fire broke out which destroyed the whole palace apart from Westminster Hall and a few minor buildings.

After the fire a competition was held for a new design and Sir Charles Barry's was chosen from a total of 97 entries. Barry's vision for Westminster in a Perpendicular Gothic style was in harmony with the surviving buildings and was also carefully designed to serve the day-to-day needs and workings of parliament. All in all the construction of the new palace took some 30 years. Its sumptuous interior decoration was the work of Augustus Welby Pugin, a gifted 23-year-old Roman Catholic architect and draughtsman. Westminster's new design was so successful that it not only influenced the designs of town halls, law courts and schools throughout the British Empire, but it also came to be recognised globally as an architectural masterpiece.

Today, after all these centuries, the Palace of Westminster remains at the heart of UK government. It contains over 1,100 rooms, 100 staircases and some 4.8 kilometres (three miles) of passageways which are spread over four floors. Despite being over 170 years old, the palace still functions smoothly, acting as a backdrop for both the cut and thrust of modern politics and royal ceremonial life, such as the state opening of parliament. Still officially a royal residence after almost a thousand years, the Palace of Westminster was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, as a seminal example of neo-Gothic architecture.

Did you know?

The lantern at the top of the Elizabeth Tower is only lit after dark when parliament is sitting.

"Westminster's new design was so successful it influenced buildings throughout the British Empire"

1649

Fate of a king
Charles I (right) is condemned to death in Westminster Hall after his defeat in the English Civil War.



1834

The Great Fire
The Palace of Westminster, dating from medieval times, is destroyed by fire.



1835

Competition
Sir Charles Barry wins a competition to rebuild the palace in a Gothic-revival style.

1840

The first stone
The first stone of the new palace is laid by Charles Barry's wife in the north-east corner of the building.

The Palace of Westminster

Statistics



The Palace of Westminster

Architect: Sir Charles Barry

Years of construction: 1840-1870

Type of building/purpose: Parliament building

Location: The City of Westminster, London

Full height: 98.5m (323ft)

Area of site: 3.2 hectares (8 acres)

Cost of construction: £2m (over £100m/\$160.5m today)

Surviving the Blitz

During the course of World War II, the Palace of Westminster was hit by German bombs on 14 separate occasions. The worst raid took place on the night of 10 May 1941, when the palace took at least 12 hits and three people were killed. An incendiary bomb struck the chamber of the House of Commons and set it on fire, while another set the roof of Westminster Hall alight. The firefighters could not save both and so the decision was taken to rescue the historically important hall. In this they were successful, but the abandoned Commons Chamber was completely gutted, as was the Members' Lobby. A bomb also struck the Lords Chamber, but luckily it went through the floor without exploding. The Elizabeth Tower (which houses Big Ben) was hit by a small bomb or shell just below the roof line and it suffered much damage as a result. All the glass in the south dial was blown out, but the hands and bells were not affected – amazingly, despite the explosion, the clock continued to keep time accurately. The Commons Chamber was rebuilt after the war by the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The reconstruction was in a simplified version of the old chamber's style, and it is Scott's chamber – not Augustus Pugin's – that we know today.

1859

- **Big Ben arrives**
The bell that has famously come to be known as Big Ben is installed in the Elizabeth Tower.

1870

- **Westminster complete**
The rebuilding of the new Palace of Westminster is completed.

1941

- **The Blitz**
The Commons Chamber is destroyed on 10/11 May – the last day of the London Blitz.



2000

- **Portcullis House**
A new parliamentary building to house Members of Parliament's offices is completed. It was officially opened by the Queen in 2001.



© Thinkstock/Dreamstime

Execution of Charles I

After years of ruinous war, the king was made to pay the ultimate price

On the morning of 30 January 1649, a bitter, biting wind tore through the streets of London, enough to send men and women to seek solace in the sheltered corners of the city. Despite the frost, people swarmed expectantly to a makeshift scaffold outside the Banqueting House at the Palace of Whitehall. It wasn't every day the king was to be executed, after all.

Guided onto the stage set for his death, Charles I faced out towards the city, separated from spectators by a swarm of soldiers. Anticipating the chill, Charles was wearing two heavy shirts to buffer his shakes so his people wouldn't mistake his shivering for fright.

Charles opened his mouth, ready to deliver his last speech, but the words were whipped from his mouth by the wind. Instead, the king turned to the men surrounding him on the scaffold: "I shall be very little heard of anybody here, I shall therefore speak a word unto you here," he began. "Indeed I could hold my peace very well, if I did not think that holding my peace would make some men think that I did submit to the guilt as well as to the punishment. But I think it is my duty to God first and to my country for to clear myself both as an honest man and a good king, and a good Christian." For the first and only time, Charles defended his position, a futile attempt to clear his name and defend his innocence. As his speech drew to a close, he stated simply, "I have delivered my conscience. I pray God, that you do take those courses that are best for the good of the kingdom and your own salvations."

He turned and muttered to his masked executioner, then dropped to his knees. Silently, the king prayed before leaning forwards and laying his neck on the block. For a moment, nothing happened. He then stretched his arms forward. It was the sign his executioner had





Sir Anthony van Dyck's famous portrait of Charles I shows the king from three viewpoints

“Cromwell allowed Charles's head to be sewn back onto the body a day after his execution”

been waiting for - Charles I was ready to meet his end.

The axe dropped. A soft groan grew and reverberated through the crowds. Men, women and children slowly pushed forwards, handkerchiefs in hand, ready to soak up the blood of England's executed king. In silence, the executioner grabbed the decapitated, bloody head by its matted hair and brandished the lifeless face of Charles I at his people. The king was dead.

It was an unprecedented move that sent shock waves the world over, but Charles certainly hadn't helped himself, and perhaps inadvertently signed his own death warrant.

Early in December 1648, members of Parliament who were sympathetic to the Royalist cause were arrested in what was known as Pride's Purge. Left were those who supported the military, forming the so-called Rump Parliament. On 1 January 1649, this stripped-down House of Commons submitted an ordinance to try the king for treason - yet

just the next day, the House of Lords rejected it, declaring the indictment as unlawful; after all, by his very nature, the king was above the law.

Incensed, the Commons declared itself capable of passing laws with neither the House of Lords' approval, nor the royal assent. On 6 January, it declared that a court would be set up to put the king on trial. A list of 135 commissioners and three judges was made, known as the High Court of Justice, though fewer than half of those nominated were at court for Charles's sentencing. Although not the first choice, a lawyer named John Bradshaw was made head of the court, while John Cook, a solicitor, was chosen as prosecutor.

The High Court of Justice faced a problem. No king had ever been tried in a court of law before. However, a Dutch historian - and staunch anti-monarchist - called Isaac Dorislaus played a key role in legally overthrowing the king. Appointed as a legal advisor to the High Court of Justice, Dorislaus used his studies on ancient Roman laws



A sketch of Isaac Dorislaus, who played a key role in condemning Charles I

"Stubborn to the end of his trial, Charles denied its legality and refused to respond to his accusers' claims"



The head of Charles I is held aloft by the masked executioner

Who killed the king?

The probable executioner of Charles I

For centuries, the identity of the man who took the life of King Charles I has remained a mystery; the executioner was masked, and even when the king's decapitated head was presented to the crowd, the axeman remained mute so that his voice couldn't be recognised. However, with the beheading over in one swift swing of the axe blade, there's no doubt that the

executioner was experienced. One notorious executioner has long been held as prime suspect: Richard Brandon.

Initially approached by Cromwell's forces and offered £30 for the position, it's known that Brandon initially refused to execute the king. Whether the man caved in later after threats or offers of more money, however, is unknown.

Brandon himself had inherited his trade from his father, an equally infamous executioner called Gregory Brandon, whose first name became synonymous with death. After his son took up the mantle, he found himself branded with the nickname 'Young Gregory', and collectively the family business, known as 'the Gregorian tree', became a synonym for the Tyburn gallows.

Execution of Charles I

to base the charges against King Charles I on a law that stated that the military could overthrow a tyrant. On 8 January, the High Court of Justice officially opened. On 9 January, the king's trial was publicly announced, and the following days were spent finalising the charges, garnering evidence, and completing any final arrangements.

On 20 January, the trial began at Westminster Hall. Among a crowd filled with commissioners, judges and soldiers, Charles sat to hear the charges against him. Yet the king himself questioned the legality of the court and refused to plead his innocence. Charles didn't recognise the court, pointing out that the ordinance that had led to it hadn't been sanctioned by either the House of Lords or himself, exclaiming, "I would know by what power I am called hither... I would know by what authority, I mean lawful." For Charles, this became his response to any question - stubborn to the end of his trial, he denied its legality and refused to respond to his accusers' claims.

With the king refusing to enter a plea, the court continued as if he had pleaded guilty - standard practice should the defendant refuse to cooperate. The trial continued over the rest of the week, with over 30 witnesses summoned to provide evidence of the king's tyranny and treason. Yet with

witnesses providing their statements in a separate room to the rest of the court, Charles didn't hear their claims, nor was there an opportunity for their statements to be questioned.

By 27 January 1649 - the last session of court - a verdict had been agreed. The king was found guilty and declared a "tyrant, traitor and murderer; and a public and implacable enemy to the Commonwealth of England" by the head of the High Court of Justice, Bradshaw. His sentence was death.

Only now, condemned to death, did Charles attempt to defend himself. But for the king, it was too little too late. Instead of hearing his plea, the court informed the king that the time had passed to defend himself, and he was quickly ushered out of the court by soldiers. Over the course of that day and the next, Charles's death warrant was signed by 59 of the commissioners.

With the execution set for 30 January, the Rump Parliament set about abolishing the monarchy. An 'Act prohibiting the proclaiming any person to be King of England or Ireland, or the Dominions thereof' was passed (naturally without Royal Assent) and put into effect the day that Charles was executed. As the blade fell on Charles's neck, the future of England was

irrevocably shaped. For the first time since its foundation as a united country, England had no monarch; there was no king to rule the land.

Cromwell had known that with Charles I alive, there would always be unrest; the nation was divided by tradition and innovation, and under Charles I's authoritarian rule, the two could not work alongside each other. Stubborn, arrogant and resolved on his divine right to rule to the very end, Charles I met his tragic fate. Not only was it an unprecedented execution of a king, it was the end of absolute monarchism. In death, Charles I taught a lesson to monarchs of all nations that followed - and those that chose not to listen and opted instead to pursue their own autocratic rule faced a wrath that likewise couldn't be quelled without bloodshed.



"The king's blood, which had been soaked up in handkerchiefs, was thought to cure any illness"

Charles I is led to his execution



BANQUETING HOUSE

Today, Banqueting House is part of the Historic Royal Palaces. As well as seeing the paintings of King Charles I, you can walk in his footsteps and even stand where he was executed.



The Great Plague of London

The Great Plague swept through London in 1665, leaving devastation in its wake and almost a quarter of the population dead

The Great Plague came to London in 1665, and raged for 18 long, punishing months. It wasn't the first time the plague had raged in the English capital during the four decades of the second pandemic, but it was no less devastating for that.

London first battled the plague in 1348, and in the centuries that followed, Europe endured sporadic outbreaks of the deadly disease. Three hundred years after that initial outbreak, perhaps Londoners had thought themselves safe, but they were anything but. The Great Plague of London was the last major outbreak of the Black Death in England to date, and it was catastrophic.

When a comet streaked across the night sky in 1664, the people of England looked up in terror, wondering what horrors it might herald. Deep in an industrial city steeped in its own filth, where tenements tottered over the sewage-ridden streets and the stench of dirt and death

was commonplace, the half a million inhabitants of London were sadly used to disease, but as the years had passed, outbreaks of the dreaded plague had decreased to such a number that they were virtually inconsequential.

This was a city that had become used to death, but when reports of continental plague outbreaks began to filter across to England, the Privy Council met to discuss what was necessary to ensure that the disease could not reach their country. Desperate to keep the plague at bay, a programme of quarantining ships that had come from infected countries was immediately put into action. For those who had recently come ashore before those measures were introduced, there was to be no escaping quarantine, and they were confined to their homes for 40 days.

When news reached England that the Dutch Republic was heavily infected, authorities moved to include all Dutch ships in its quarantine.

“The Great Plague of London was the last major outbreak of the Black Death in England to date, and it was catastrophic”

Book of London

Everyone hoped that the government's decisive action would ensure the Black Death didn't gain a foothold in England again, but when death rates began to climb in the poverty-stricken district of St Giles in the early months of 1665, it was clear that the quarantine had failed. The Black Death had returned.

Tens of thousands in Amsterdam had fallen victim to the plague in the previous 12 months, and now the disease had travelled across the sea into England. Around the docks and in St Giles, houses began to be sealed, a red cross daubed on the door as a sign of infection. Conditions in the area were already dire and the people panicked, rioting as their neighbourhood was put into isolation and pesthouses were constructed, intended to quarantine the thousands of victims the government thought were about to emerge from the populace.

As the weeks passed, a handful of cases became a few dozen clustered outside the city, but with each new death they crept closer and closer until, finally, the first casualty was reported within the city walls. With that death, there could be no question that the plague was posing a threat to the city itself. Once again, the Privy Council met, and once again it seemed as though quarantine measures were the answer or, more likely, the only option available to the government.

Cleaning up the filth in the streets was a battle that was doomed to fail, yet public meeting places such as taverns were closed down to discourage large groups of people from gathering together and increasing the risk of infection. With every

passing day, London was living in terror of each new death, and for those who could afford to do so, escape began to look like an attractive alternative to staying in the plague-infested capital. To leave, however, a person had to be able to show a certificate signed by the lord mayor that testified to their good health. These certificates were difficult to obtain for the poor, who were essentially condemned to face the contagion or battle starvation as they made the exhausting journey on foot in search of sanctuary.

In July, 3,000 people died in London, 2,000 of whom fell victim to the plague. It was the final straw for King Charles II, and he instructed his entire court to move to Salisbury. Later they would

"Bodies began to pile up in the streets or on the mounds in the plague pits"

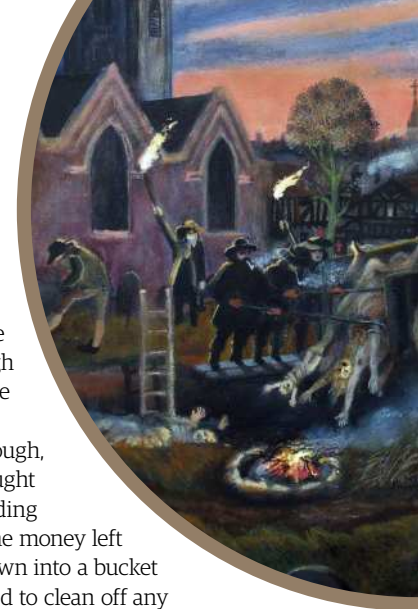
travel on to Oxford, keeping one step ahead of the disease, but many could not afford to make their escape. The streets filled with a panicked exodus of people who had left everything behind to escape the plague-ridden confines of London. Industry ground to a halt, and shops and public spaces closed down, leaving London a ghost town.

Dead-carts, priests and plague doctors stalked the streets, clearing the dead, tending the dying and attempting to bring some spiritual comfort to those left in London. The lord mayor, Sir John Lawrence, remained in the city and, fatefully, the government ordered an extermination of cats and

dogs, leaving the plague-carrying rats free to swarm through the streets. Those who remained didn't starve, though, as food was brought in from surrounding farmland, and the money left to pay for it thrown into a bucket of water, intended to clean off any germs that it might be carrying.

The once teeming, vibrant English capital was now a city of the dead. Plague pits were dug

to accommodate the sheer number of corpses, which were gathered up each evening once night fell. Soon the dead-carts were overwhelmed, and bodies began to pile up in the streets or on the mounds already deposited in the plague pits,



The Black Death

The Black Death remains one of the most infamous pandemics in the history of the world. From its birthplace in central Asia, it spread across the continental mainland and all the way to England and beyond, claiming as many as 200 million lives.

Once believed to be caused by anything from bad air to God's wrath against the sinners of the world, we now know that the disease was actually carried by flea-infested rats, meaning those culls of cats and dogs during the Great Plague of London only helped the disease to spread. The Black Death was actually a variant of the bubonic plague caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, and it first came to Europe in 1346. Over the next 500 years there were three plague pandemics, with the infection most commonly typified by symptomatic buboes that are the most well-known sign of the Black Death.

Although uncommon today, cases of plague are still reported sporadically across the world. However, modern treatments are effective at treating the infection. If the plague bacterium mutates, of course, that could all change.



Images such as the glowering pesthouse and plague pit in Finsbury Fields became commonplace

Fires burned on every street corner to purify the air that it was wrongly believed was spreading the disease, yet all the casualties climbed, until deaths per week were being September.

The court returned in February 1666, and following in the king's wake were the rich and powerful. As normality began to slowly creep back to London, the city came to life once more. The taverns rang with laughter again, the docks and industrial centres fired back into action, shops and business put up signs declaring they were open, and the streets - once full of so much death - breathed anew.

London was far from the worst casualty of the Great Plague, and all across England, survivors were left to rebuild their shattered land. They did so with admirable speed and skill, and since the end of the second pandemic, there has been no further outbreak of the Black Death in Europe. Why the plague petered out we cannot be certain, but improved sanitation and living conditions certainly contributed, as did better nutrition and slow improvements in the standards of medicine and hygiene.

Around three per cent of the country's population died, lower than in any earlier epidemic, though the impact on London was greater than previous outbreaks. Through quarantine, plague and flight, the city had survived. It would not be the last challenge London would face, but the worst was over.

The Bills of Mortality from 1665 make for gruesome reading, charting the stratospheric death toll

The discovery of a plague victim could mean quarantine and swift death for those forced to remain

THE CITY PESTHOUSE PLAQUE
Pay a visit to Bath Street, Islington, and you'll find a green historic plaque marking the site of the City Pesthouse, once the last home for the victims of the Great Plague of London.

Pay a visit to Bath Street, Islington, and you'll find a green historic plaque marking the site of the City Pesthouse, once the last home for the victims of the Great Plague of London.



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

In a city pushed to breaking point, the smouldering coals from a bakehouse devastated the heart of England

Deep in the early hours of Sunday 2 September 1666, the plague-stricken and drought-ridden City of London was changed forever. In an unassuming and unremarkable bakehouse on Pudding Lane, as the baker and his family slumbered, a fire started that would blaze for days.

Within minutes, the flames had built into a nightmarish inferno and the stage was set for one of the most important events in the life of Restoration England. The Medieval lanes and alleyways that made a labyrinth of the City of London filled with fire, timber and thatch - feeding the flames that lit up the sky for three long, devastating nights. The Great Fire of London wreaked havoc, seemingly unstoppable, until it was finally brought under control on Wednesday 5 September.

When the flames died to embers and the smoke cleared, the City of London was left in ruins. Although official casualties were surprisingly few, there was no such mercy for the buildings squeezed into the tightly packed

streets. Crowded wooden tenements were reduced to ash and tens of thousands were made homeless and left with nothing to their name.

In the aftermath of the fire, scapegoats were sought and found, and an innocent man went to the gallows. For those who followed a different faith or came from overseas, this was a time of suspicion and distrust. So dark did things become that the king himself dispatched troops not only to fight the fire, but to save those who had, for one reason or another, attracted the attention of the mobs who crowded the streets, calling for justice.

As days turned into weeks and weeks into months, the process of rebuilding London became the primary focus of Crown and parliament. From the rudest tenement to the great Cathedral of Saint Paul's, the buildings that had been swallowed by fire were painstakingly replaced with new structures. It was a time of change, with famed names like Sir Christopher Wren reshaping and building the foundations of the city that we know today.

LONDON IN THE 1660s

Crowded and disease-ridden, London was bursting at the seams. It was a city waiting to explode

At the dawn of 1666, the great metropolis of London was the largest city in Great Britain. More than 500,000 people were packed cheek by jowl into its sprawling buildings, the city expanding far beyond its original confines until the slums spilled out of the city walls. London had been a centre of commerce, trade and civilisation for centuries and it was growing at an unprecedented rate. People from all over the world came to live in the city, creating a cosmopolitan, and sometimes confrontational, melting pot.

Home to about 80,000 people, the vast majority lost not only their accommodation to the inferno, but virtually everything they owned. Packed tightly into the unyielding city walls and with the mighty River Thames forming a natural boundary to the south, the Medieval founders of the City of London had not envisioned such a vast number of inhabitants when they laid out the city.

London was a maze of twisting, narrow alleyways that rarely saw the sun, its residents deprived of fresh air or basic sanitation. As the centuries passed, it had grown and developed, unplanned and virtually unregulated despite efforts to increase restrictions on what could be

built and where. Instead, buildings were seemingly dropped down anywhere, no sooner finished than they were already filling with residents desperate for a roof over their heads.

This forest of tottering wooden tenements with dry thatched roofs provided fertile kindling for the hungry fire. Although combustible materials were supposedly prohibited, stone was expensive, while wood and thatch was cheap, so builders took a risk, regardless of regulation. As the overcrowding grew worse, those who could afford to began to move out of the centre of the city. Estates were set out, the large stone houses of the wealthy surrounded by open ground, but for those who could not afford to escape, the future was bleak.

Suburbs and slums sprang up and the vast majority of the population settled in these ill-maintained buildings. With so many people living in squalid conditions, the conditions were rife for catastrophe and the plague took a devastating hold of the City of London in 1665. The rich had no desire to be in the centre of this crowded, stinking swarm, and even though they maintained their spacious, fine city residences built of strong stone, they often left the seething streets of the capital behind. For those with money, there was another world far beyond the slums.

Here, in the fresh rural air, the wealthy settled in their country retreats when the working week was done, while King Charles II made his court in Westminster. In fact, his palace came perilously close to being devoured by the flames that consumed so much of London. In fact, the king's initial efforts to help extinguish the flames were rebuffed, while personal and political prejudices contributed to the spread of the inferno and the scale of the damage that was wrought.

"This forest of tottering wooden tenements with dry thatched roofs provided fertile kindling for the hungry fire"

A pre-Great Fire view of London, with the old London Bridge spanning the Thames



The Great Fire of London

Religion

The 1605 Gunpowder Plot shocked the nation, deepening the distrust between Protestants and Catholics in England. Although decades had passed since then, religious intolerance had not grown any less, and if anything was guaranteed to raise passions it was religion. Catholics were viewed with suspicion at best and hostility at worst and fears of religious terrorism were never far from the public consciousness. When the fire took hold, rumours of a Catholic plot spread quickly and soon those who had lost their homes were looking for revenge. So hostile were the displaced Londoners that foreigners and Catholics were forced to take shelter. Although some were saved by soldiers, others had to hide from those same troops, mindful that the authorities would be looking for scapegoats of their own.

Politics

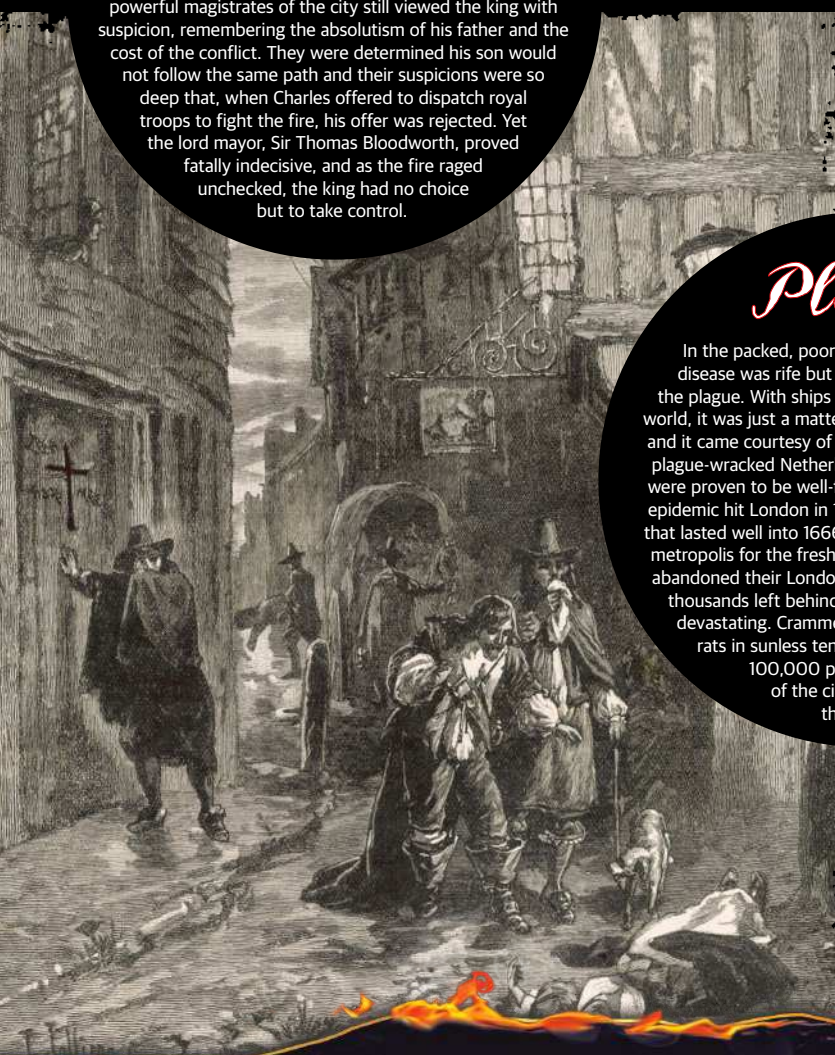
In the 1660s, England was still reeling from the devastating Civil War that had shattered the country, and in the City of London, passions still ran high. During the conflict, the powerful and rich city had turned against the Crown and championed the cause of republicanism. The battles might have been over, but both Londoners and Charles II remembered those dark times. The powerful magistrates of the city still viewed the king with suspicion, remembering the absolutism of his father and the cost of the conflict. They were determined his son would not follow the same path and their suspicions were so deep that, when Charles offered to dispatch royal troops to fight the fire, his offer was rejected. Yet the lord mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, proved fatally indecisive, and as the fire raged unchecked, the king had no choice but to take control.

Pepys

On 1 January 1660, a naval administrator named Samuel Pepys penned the first words in his diary. Within its pages he recorded not just everyday life but firsthand accounts of some of the most momentous events in 17th-century history, including intrigue, fire and plague. His was a story of success, of advancement through the ranks and into high office, yet through it all, Pepys maintained his eye for drama and a witty turn of phrase for every occasion. His iconic diary offers a rare opportunity to see life through the eyes of the 17th-century middle classes and is arguably the most important primary social source of the Restoration. Charting the ups and downs of both England's life and his own, Pepys kept his diary for almost a decade until failing eyesight caused him to abandon it on 31 May 1669.

Plague

In the packed, poorly sanitised City of London, disease was rife but none was more feared than the plague. With ships arriving daily from all over the world, it was just a matter of time before disaster struck, and it came courtesy of a vessel carrying cloth from the plague-racked Netherlands. Public fears of the illness were proven to be well-founded when the Great Plague epidemic hit London in 1665, taking a catastrophic hold that lasted well into 1666. The wealthy fled the crowded metropolis for the fresh country air and the royal court abandoned their London palaces for Salisbury. For the thousands left behind, however, the epidemic was devastating. Cramped together with flea-ridden rats in sunless tenement rooms, more than 100,000 people, or a quarter of the city, fell victim to the plague.



LONDON'S BURNING

The Great Fire was a landmark event in British history, but what sparked the inferno and how did a king try to extinguish it?

London in the autumn of 1666 was dry, dirty and dusty, no rain having fallen in ten long months. In the plague-ridden city, the wooden tenements were just waiting to go up in flames. When night fell on Saturday 1 September 1666, baker Thomas Farriner closed his Pudding Lane bakery and went to bed. As he slept, the bakehouse coals he had thought safely extinguished caught light, and before long the ground floor of the Farriner bakery was ablaze.

With flames blocking the exits, Farriner, his family and their servant fled across the rooftops. Behind them they left a maid who was too afraid of heights to follow. That anonymous, terrified girl was the first casualty of the Great Fire of London.

Strong winds blew embers and flames out into the streets, igniting the sun-bleached buildings and hay bales. As the watch rallied to the cries of "Fire!" they decided to create a firebreak by demolishing neighbouring buildings. Residents refused to give consent and with stalemate reached, the lord mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, was summoned to the scene.

When Bloodworth arrived, he refused to exercise his right to demand the demolition of

the buildings. Without the permission of the king, the City of London would have to bear the cost of rebuilding, and he wasn't about to take on that expense. Perhaps Bloodworth believed this was just one more fire among the many small blazes that often burned in the city, but such beliefs would be proven catastrophically incorrect.

Its infernal progress seemingly unstoppable, once the fire hit the dockside and the highly combustible cargoes stored there, all chances of extinguishing it quickly were lost.

As the night sky turned red, diarist Samuel Pepys left his home and travelled by river to see the extent of the fire. He watched as the city went up in flames, churches and slums alike consumed by the inferno. Pepys recorded the progress and aftermath of the fire in his diaries, lending a

unique first-hand account of that infamous time. Through his eyes we see Bloodworth falter, the royal family flourish and the people panic.

Fleeing before the raging conflagration, Londoners tried to save what they could. They

hurled their belongings into boats and handcarts or even into the river. Soon the hot, narrow streets were an impassable tide of the dispossessed as thousands of people fled for their lives. Firefighters couldn't break through the panicked mass and the king, far from safe in his palace, took action.

Charles II gave the order to tear down every building

in the path of the fire, hoping to stop it with firebreaks. Still the blaze spread and by Monday, the north bank of the Thames was alight, London Bridge was aflame and Southwark was threatened by winds lifting embers over the river. The spread of the fire into south London was mercifully

"Strong winds blew embers and flames out into the streets, igniting the sun-bleached buildings and hay bales"

The Great Fire as seen from a boat in the vicinity of Tower Wharf



stopped by a firebreak on the bridge, yet in the city there was no such luck. A firestorm engulfed the Royal Exchange, the middle-class homes of city professionals and all that stood in its way.

As civil unrest threatened, the king put his brother, the Duke of York, in charge of dealing with the fire. York took charge of the controlled demolitions, and his troops were dispatched to quell unrest in the streets. Stories tell that Charles II himself came into the city and pulled down buildings, throwing water onto the flames as everyone that could help did their bit.

By the time Saint Paul's Cathedral fell, pouring molten lead into the streets, it must have seemed as though the world was ending. Should the firestorm reach the Tower of London, the gunpowder stored there would go up like a bomb, and houses between it and the flames were demolished with explosives, creating a firebreak.

As the wind fell on Tuesday night, the firebreaks had finally started to do their job. The raging flames now died down, leaving thousands homeless, terrified and utterly lost in a London that had become unrecognisable.

The fire in Pepys' own words



2 September The spreading flames

By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish-street, by London Bridge. ...it begun this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding-lane.

3 September Panic in the streets

About four o'clock in the morning, my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money, and plate, and best things, to Sir W. Rider's at Bednall-green. Which I did riding myself in my night-gowne in the cart; and, Lord! to see how the streets and the highways are crowded with people running and riding, for all.

4 September Saving the cheese

Sir W. Batten not knowing how to remove his wine, did dig a pit in the garden, and laid it in there; and I took the opportunity of laying all the papers of my office [...] And in the evening Sir W. Pen and I did dig another, and put our wine in it; and I my Parmazan cheese.

5 September Devastation

Lord! what sad sight it was by moone-light to see, the whole City almost on fire, ...the saddest sight of desolation that I ever saw; every where great fires, coyle-cellars, and brimstone, and other things burning.

6 September Conspiracy

[On discovering a new fire] There is some kind of plot in this (on which many by this time have been taken, and, it hath been dangerous for any stranger to walk in the streets), but I went with the men, and we did put it out in a little time; so that that was well again.

Firefighting in the 17th century

In a city built mostly of wood, especially one that had endured a total drought since the previous November, small fires were commonplace. Quite apart from domestic candles, fireplaces and ovens, the City of London itself was full of fire hazards. Despite restrictions on where businesses could be located, smithies, foundries, and bakeries, among others, provided plenty of combustible material in the heart of the metropolis.

When fires broke out, members of the watch would ring church bells and public-spirited citizens would rally to the call, sometimes with the aid of the local militias. Firefighting equipment was held in parish churches and those facing the flames used not only water, but the buildings themselves. Structures were demolished to provide firebreaks that would block the flames and prevent them from spreading. In fact, it was firebreaks, triggered by gunpowder demolitions, that finally put paid to the spread of the Great Fire of London.



Early Fire Engine named "Ye Deluge"

Used at the Great Fire of London, 1666, and "attended the first fire at Bournemouth.—DR. FALLS, 1867"

THE AFTERMATH

As the flames died down, the city counted the cost of the tragedy, not to mention the casualties

On 5 September 1666, as the remains of the City of London smouldered, it finally seemed as though the worst was over. Though the immediate danger had passed, cleaning up in the aftermath of the inferno would take years.

The devastated city was shrouded in smoke, small fires still burning here and there among the ruins, bright and hot amid the ash. Enormous numbers of casualties were expected, yet when the toll of the dead was counted, it was, unbelievably, just six, certainly less than ten. Of course, this accounts only for those whose remains were found. The fire burned so hot and through such tightly packed areas that it's possible many others, particularly the infirm, old and very young, were completely cremated and lost among the ashes of their homes. We can never know the true human cost of the fire, though if it was truly just six, it's nothing short of miraculous. For the survivors, there were to be precious few miracles in the days to come – tens of thousands of people left with nothing as a harsh winter fell over the City of London. In the months that followed the Great Fire, those who lost everything to the flames found that surviving the inferno had only been the beginning of their woes. Now they began to fall victim to rampant disease, or the bitter cold and starvation, not to mention the mobs seeking foreigners and seditious traitors to lynch.

Baker Thomas Farriner, in whose bakehouse the fire had started, was quick to point the finger elsewhere. He claimed that he wasn't to blame, and wasn't about to be hung out to dry. Instead, Farriner was determined that someone else should bear the responsibility for the catastrophe, and there was no shortage of candidates. The search for someone to blame began in earnest

before the fire was extinguished, and that search would lead an innocent man to the Tyburn tree.

Perhaps the most tragic story to come out of the Great Fire of London is that of Robert Hubert, a simple-minded young man with a habit of confessing to starting fires that had nothing to do with him. Hubert died on the famous Tyburn Gallows after he confessed to having firebombed the bakery. He claimed that French Catholics in the employ of the Pope himself had paid him

“Those who lost everything to the flames found that surviving the inferno had only been the beginning of their woes”

to commit the crime but now his conscience had forced him to confess. Hubert was entirely innocent, of course, and after his death it was discovered that he had not even been in the country on the night of the fire, but had been at sea. Yet anti-Catholicism was rife and rumours spread even quicker than the fire that conjured up papist conspiracies and suspicion.

King Charles II invited proposals for rebuilding the shattered city and he received them in abundance, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. At the same time, compensation and property disputes came in at such a rate that a special Fire Court was established to ensure a speedy resolution. Some of the destroyed billings seemed to have multiple owners who wanted to claim compensation or, conversely for those structures that had been built illegally, no owners at all. The Fire Court was charged with unpicking the tangled strands of claim and counterclaim and ensuring that each case was wrapped up as quickly as possible.



The fire in numbers

The fire burned at

1700°C

2/3RDS

of London Bridge
was burned, saving
Southwark and the city
south of the river

1

cathedral was razed to the ground

The fire burned for

3 NIGHTS
6 DEATHS

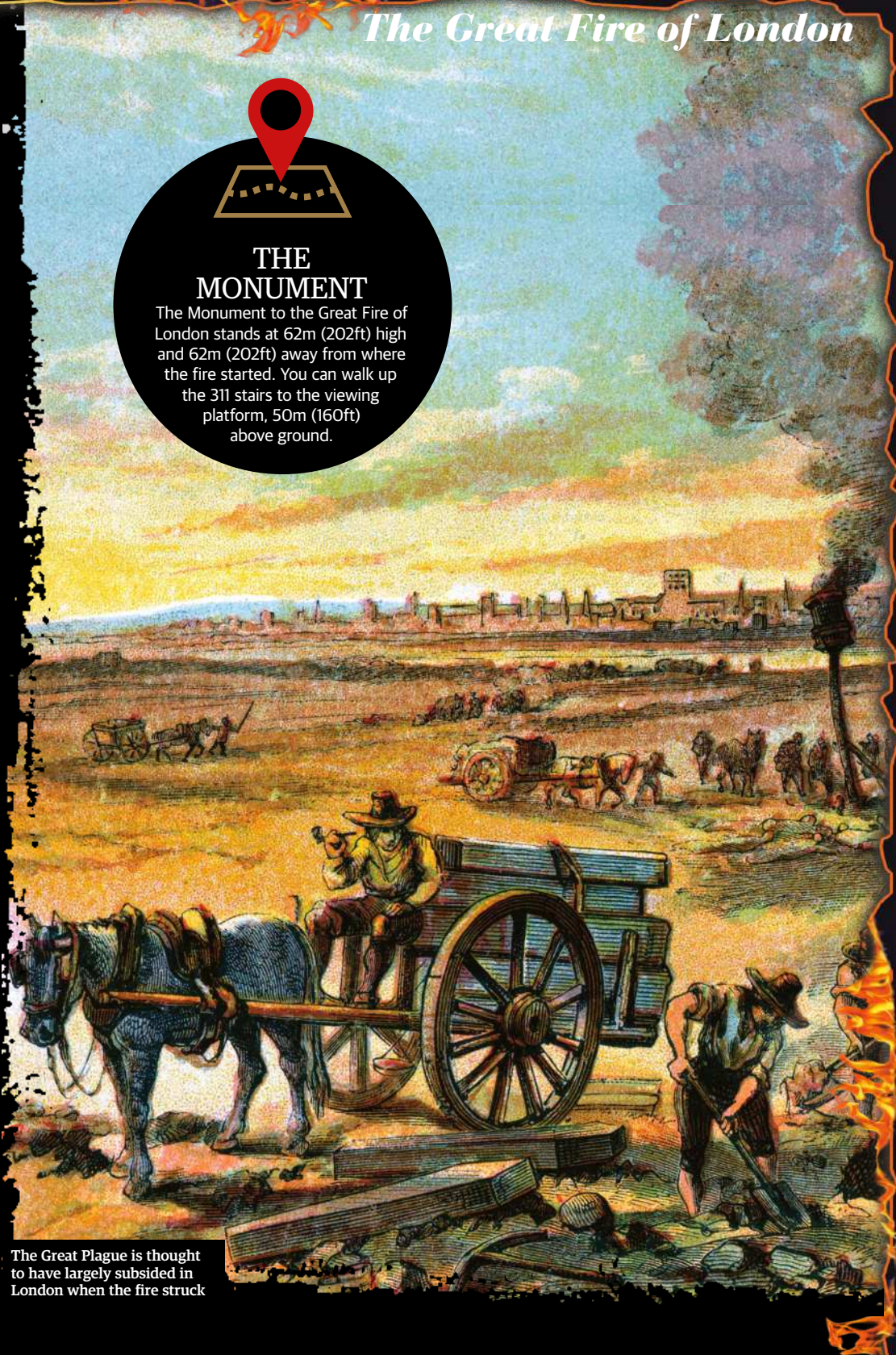
were recorded



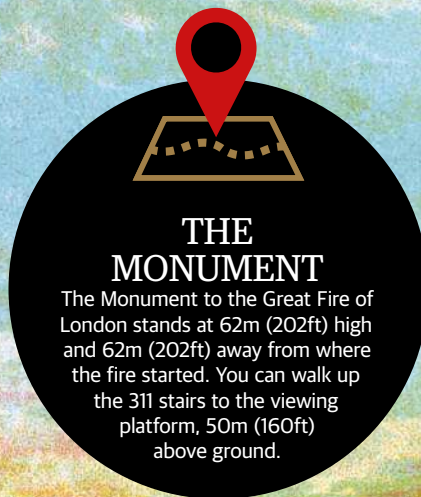
LONDON in the Year 1666.

The responsibility for rebuilding the City of London fell to the six commissioners for rebuilding, one of whom was Sir Christopher Wren. Although many proposals for a new layout were put forward, in the end those public buildings that had been razed were rebuilt on their original sites, and though no radical restructuring took place, the look of the city was completely transformed. Gone were the tottering tenements that blocked out the sun, with the narrow alleyways replaced by wider, safer streets and access to the Thames improved. Where once timber slums had crowded along the wharves, now the waterways were clear, the highly combustible goods stored there kept safely away from residences. Under strict new laws, all buildings had to be made of stone or brick, the better to resist fire. The churches that had burned and Saint Paul's Cathedral were rebuilt according to Wren's designs and Charles II ordered a memorial monument to be constructed to commemorate the fire, also designed by Wren.

For those who moved into new buildings, conditions were greatly improved, yet the wait for accommodation was long, and slums were far from a thing of the past for the people of London.



The Great Fire of London



THE MONUMENT

The Monument to the Great Fire of London stands at 62m (202ft) high and 62m (202ft) away from where the fire started. You can walk up the 311 stairs to the viewing platform, 50m (160ft) above ground.

The Great Plague is thought to have largely subsided in London when the fire struck

The monetary cost of the fire was
£10 MILLION
 more than
£1 BILLION TODAY

13,200 houses were destroyed

Pepys saved
1
PARMESAN CHEESE



Rebuilding London

In a city ravaged by fire, precious little was left standing. The time had come to rebuild

On 5 September 1666, what little remained of London smouldered. Mercifully the death toll was low, but the price to the city itself was enormous. Virtually nothing remained of the old medieval city of London, and King Charles II, the monarch who had tried to fight the flames, now invited proposals to rebuild the shattered capital.

Ultimate responsibility for rebuilding the city was set out by the Rebuilding of London Act 1666. The brainchild of Sir Matthew Hale, this was intended to ensure proper regulation of the rebuilding works, ostensibly to prevent such a catastrophe happening again. Rebuilding the city was an enormous undertaking, and it was to be overseen by commissioners for rebuilding, including Sir Christopher Wren, who had submitted his own plan of works. With schemes and blueprints pouring in from all quarters, what would the new city look like? Would it be a grid, or wide French-style boulevards, picturesque avenues or monumental churches, and whose plans would be accepted by the commissioners?

The answer, in fact, was nobody's. Charles and Parliament decided that time was of the essence. To start from the ground up and design an entirely new layout would take time, but with winter marching on, and tens of thousands left homeless and starving, construction had to be fast and efficient. Not only that, but the owners of the destroyed property wanted to get back on their

feet, and the king had no stomach for a fight with the wealthy and influential families who were keen to restart trading and manufacture without any delay. The task of those who were to oversee the project was made considerably more difficult by confusion over who actually owned some of the destroyed buildings, and it was left to a Fire Court to untangle the legal mess left behind.

As the Fire Court scratched its head and tried to appease those who came before it, the commissioners decided that the existing medieval pattern of streets would remain, but streets would be wider and building standards vastly improved. The project was monumental, but it was swiftly set in motion.

The fire had claimed more than 70,000 homes and dozens of public buildings. Under the plans submitted by would-be city planners, the idea was that all were to be situated in new locations, but when the rebuilding began, they were rebuilt on their original sites. However, while the layout and locations may not have changed, the face of the city would be drastically redesigned. London's timber slums had once tottered dangerously over the waterways, with narrow alleyways threading between tenements where the sun rarely shone. Now those waterways were cleared, while the narrowest lanes were widened. Under Wren's stewardship, the lost churches emerged from the ashes and above them all, St Paul's Cathedral would one day rise triumphant.

Book of London

Via the 1667 Rebuilding Act, the commissioners issued strict instructions regarding how wide streets should be, and the maximum height to which buildings should conform, as well as the materials that should be used in construction and the ruling that no upper floor could stick out over the lower storeys. The days of towering tenements that almost met at the top and kept out the daylight were, they hoped, over.

Although it was initially intended that a brand new quay should be built to reach from the Tower to Blackfriars, the plan was ultimately abandoned as the wharf side began to sprawl out over the intended site. The combustible materials that had once been stored along the Thames were now to be kept in more secure sites, and access to the waterways was vastly improved, with wider roads and open docksides becoming far more common than ever before. Further into the city, while market halls were constructed to contain the traders who had once crowded into the streets, usability trumped artistry when it came to the rebuilding. Far from the glittering new cities envisioned by Wren and his peers, only one new street was developed - King Street - while Queen Street was widened from its original narrow state into a full road, capable of carrying large vehicles.

The number of domestic houses fell by about 25 per cent, and once again, the dimensions of

each were set out by the commissioners. Builders could choose from one of four house types, with the largest being set at four storeys and permitted to be built only within a courtyard or overlooking a main street, where access would be easier. Should a house be constructed within an alley or narrower street, it would be no taller than three storeys, preferably smaller still. The timber buildings that had blazed so brightly during the Great Fire were now swept away, replaced by constructions of brick with minimal timber details where unavoidable. Even the thickness of the stone walls was dictated by the Rebuilding Act, and everything that could be done to lessen the risk of fire was implemented. The days of quickly constructed wooden buildings were over.

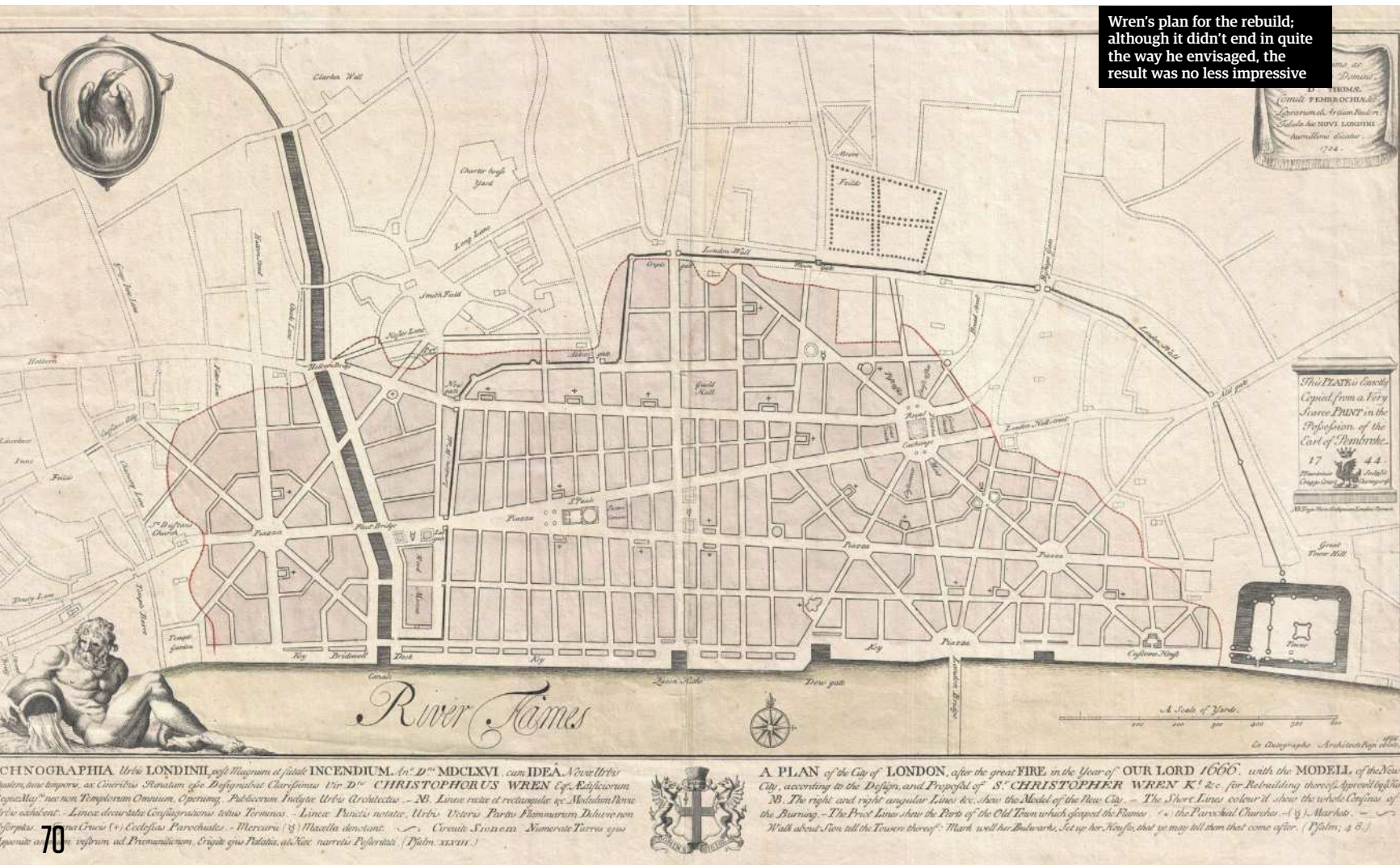
Wren oversaw the construction of more than 50 parish churches that had been destroyed in the blaze, including his monumental cathedral. Socially, there was some movement within the city as the wealthy began to move out of the old medieval walls and into the sought-after squares of Bloomsbury and Covent Garden, while the poor were forced back into the less desirable

parts of the city,
with many being
pushed to the east
where rooms were
cheap, if not plentiful.

It wasn't only dwellings that were in need of rebuilding though, and with the 1668 Fire Prevention Regulations, it was ruled that water pipes must be fitted with easily accessible plugs. This was the earliest introduction of a system of fire hydrants, invaluable should fire strike again.

The cost was immense, and the City of London drew on all its reserves to meet the bill. Private wealth covered much of the outstanding cost, as the rich chose to use the opportunity to improve on their previous houses and places of business, but there could be no dodging the rules. Included in the Act was a ruling that surveyors would ensure all regulations were met. Should anyone try to get around the rules and throw up a quickly built house of flammable timber, then they would

"The timber buildings that had blazed so brightly were now swept away"



King Street was the only new thoroughfare to be constructed, seen here in more recent times

find it swiftly pulled straight back down again.

Just ten years after the Great Fire of London devastated the city, the skyline of London rose once more. It was now a city rich in the baroque tradition, fashionable at the time and popular with not only Wren and his contemporaries, but those whose money was being employed to create the new city. Although Sir Christopher Wren's dreams of a brand-new city, constructed from the fire-blackened earth, were not to be, his identity was stamped on the face of London.

Working alongside Robert Hooke, the surveyor to the city of London, Wren and the commissioners had achieved a monumental and almost impossible task. In a few short years, they had banished the ruins left by the Great Fire of London, and though the final bricks would not be placed for many decades, the speed with which London rose from the ashes was breathtaking.

The city itself stands as a symbol of London's resilience and the work of those who strived to rebuild it. In the months following the inferno, the Great Fire of London might have seemed like the end of the world, but in fact it was anything but. Instead it was a chance for the city to rise again, as it had so many times before.

Designs on London

Robert Hooke and Sir Christopher Wren ultimately collaborated to oversee the reconstruction of London, but each had their own ideas for how they thought the rebuilt city ought to look. In the end neither was given permission to use their own designs, even though they played an enormous part in the task. Instead, London was rebuilt along its original lines, but Hooke and Wren would have left England with a very different capital indeed.

Sir Christopher Wren remains one of the most famous architects in the history of the world. Known for his masterwork, St Paul's Cathedral, Wren had hoped to rebuild London in his own image. Inspired by Paris, he envisioned a city of wide avenues, breathtaking public squares and classical buildings. Elegance would be the watchword, but it was not to be.

Philosopher and architect Robert Hooke had his own plans for the fire-ravaged city, focused primarily on the adoption of a grid pattern. Not unlike Wren, the centre of his own design was the wide avenues that would form the central roadways of the city, fed by arterial roads. Ironically, Hooke's concept of a grid design was later employed in the layout of Paris, the city that had so inspired Wren.



Perhaps more than anyone else, Sir Christopher Wren remains indelibly linked with the rebuilding of London

Designed by Wren and Hooke, the Monument to the Great Fire of London commemorates the lost city



Robert Hooke's own vision for London was never realised, but he made his name as the surveyor

St Paul's Cathedral

London's crowning glory stands as a monument to one man's genius

Sir Christopher Wren produced three designs for his new cathedral. The first two were rejected and the cathedral as built only bears a small resemblance to the third.

Built mainly of Portland stone, St Paul's contains many idiosyncrasies - two of the most familiar features, for example, are misleading. The outer walls are built in two distinct storeys, but the upper storey is false; it simply acts as a screen to hide the flying buttresses that support the high vaults. On the other hand, the iconic dome - which crowns the outside of the cathedral - is not the one inside; the interior dome is positioned much lower for aesthetic effect.

Wren gathered leading artists and craftsmen to work on the building. Perhaps the best known today are Grinling Gibbons, responsible for the woodwork; Francis Bird, who sculpted the great west pediment; and Sir James Thornhill, who painted the life of St Paul on the interior of the dome. Taking just 35 years to complete, the interior is much as Wren left it; the Victorians added some stained glass windows and mosaic decoration to the roof in the choir and above the main arches of the dome, but they blend well with Wren's grand conception.

Inner dome

The inner dome provides an artistically balanced interior, painted with eight monochrome paintings of the life of St Paul.

Outer dome

Constructed from wood and lead, the dome appears to support the stone lantern above which it rises.

Whispering gallery

30.2m above the floor, a whisper on one side of the gallery can be heard on the other.

Inside St Paul's

Inner cone

A brick cone supports both the outer dome and the stone lantern above it. It is invisible from the interior.

West pediment

The 'Conversion of St Paul' is one of the best examples of Baroque sculpture in Britain.

West front

Originally designed with six giant columns, the Portland quarries could not produce blocks of stone long enough to span the intercolumniations.

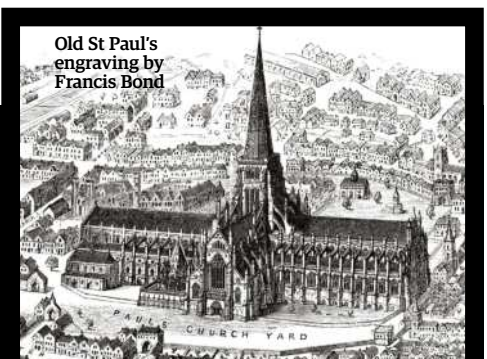
South west tower

This tower houses the cathedral clock and contains Great Paul, at 16.5 tons the largest bell in the British Isles.

Site history

London's first cathedral was built in 604, but this building or its successor was burned down in 1087. A great Norman cathedral known as 'Old St Paul's' was then built on Ludgate Hill. The choir was reconstructed in the 13th Century to provide more space, the total length reaching 178m. The spire added to the central tower in 1315 reached 149m; there were also two west towers, two cloisters and

a two-storey Chapter House. In the 17th century, Inigo Jones commissioned to improve the cathedral, refaced the nave and west end in classical style and erected a grand portico. After the Commonwealth, Wren made ready to continue these plans by casing the nave with Renaissance detail and building a dome to replace the tower, but his work was terminated by the Great Fire of 1666.





Wren's vision

Sir Christopher Wren, as Surveyor to the King's Works, was responsible for building the new St Paul's. He had previously designed such well-known buildings as the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford and the Chapel at Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Although now best known as an architect, he was also an astronomer, a scientist and a talented mathematician.

While the architectural style and detailing is Renaissance 'English Baroque', the basic form and structure of Wren's St Paul's mirrors the medieval cathedral, consisting of two western towers, a long nave, a central crossing above which rises a tower (the dome) and choir. St Paul's was the first English cathedral completed in the original architect's lifetime, which gives it an architectural unity rarely found in earlier gothic churches.



"The interior is much as Wren left it"

Choir

The choir extends eastwards from the crossing and houses the high altar, the stalls for the clergy and the organ.

Crossing

At the centre of the cathedral, this enormous space was designed as an auditorium for the preaching of sermons.

Nave

A long, deliberately empty space, built to accommodate processions and large congregations, it also contains many famous memorials.

Charles, Prince of Wales, married Lady Diana Spencer on 29 July 1981, after which St Paul's became one of the most visited churches in England.

The crypt

The crypt in St Paul's mirrors its medieval predecessor, which extended under the east end of the old cathedral. Wren's crypt, however, with its central cluster of Roman Doric pillars and simple piers below nave and choir, extends below the cathedral's full length and is the largest in Western Europe. Built using stones salvaged from the ruins of Old St Paul's, the crypt houses chapels and monuments. At the eastern end of the crypt is the OBE Chapel (Order of the British Empire). There are many notable graves in the crypt including those of Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Alexander Fleming. Wren's grave with its famous epitaph is also to be found there: 'Reader, if you seek his memorial - look around you'.



Statistics

St Paul's Cathedral

Architect: Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723)

Years of construction: 1675-1710

Type of building/purpose: Cathedral church of St Paul the Apostle, for the Anglican Diocese of London

Location: Ludgate Hill, London

Full height: 111m

Area of site: 25,697m²

Cost of construction: £738,845 (approx £87 million in modern terms)



1. 1571 The Tyburn Tree is erected

The infamous Tyburn Tree is where many a notorious criminal went to meet their maker. All that remains of the Triple Tree gallows nowadays is a memorial plaque, yet once upon a time the body of Oliver Cromwell was displayed here as a warning to all.



2. 1587 The Rose Theatre opens

This Elizabethan playhouse was closed in the early 17th century and excavated nearly 400 years later. Today visitors can view the remains of the site as well as original artefacts discovered there. You can even enjoy productions staged in this once magnificent theatre.



3. 1633 The Actors' Church opens

Better known as The Actors' Church, St Paul's overlooks Covent Garden. Designed by Inigo Jones, the church's history is rich with theatrical stories. It's even the place where Samuel Pepys watched the first documented Punch and Judy show in 1662.

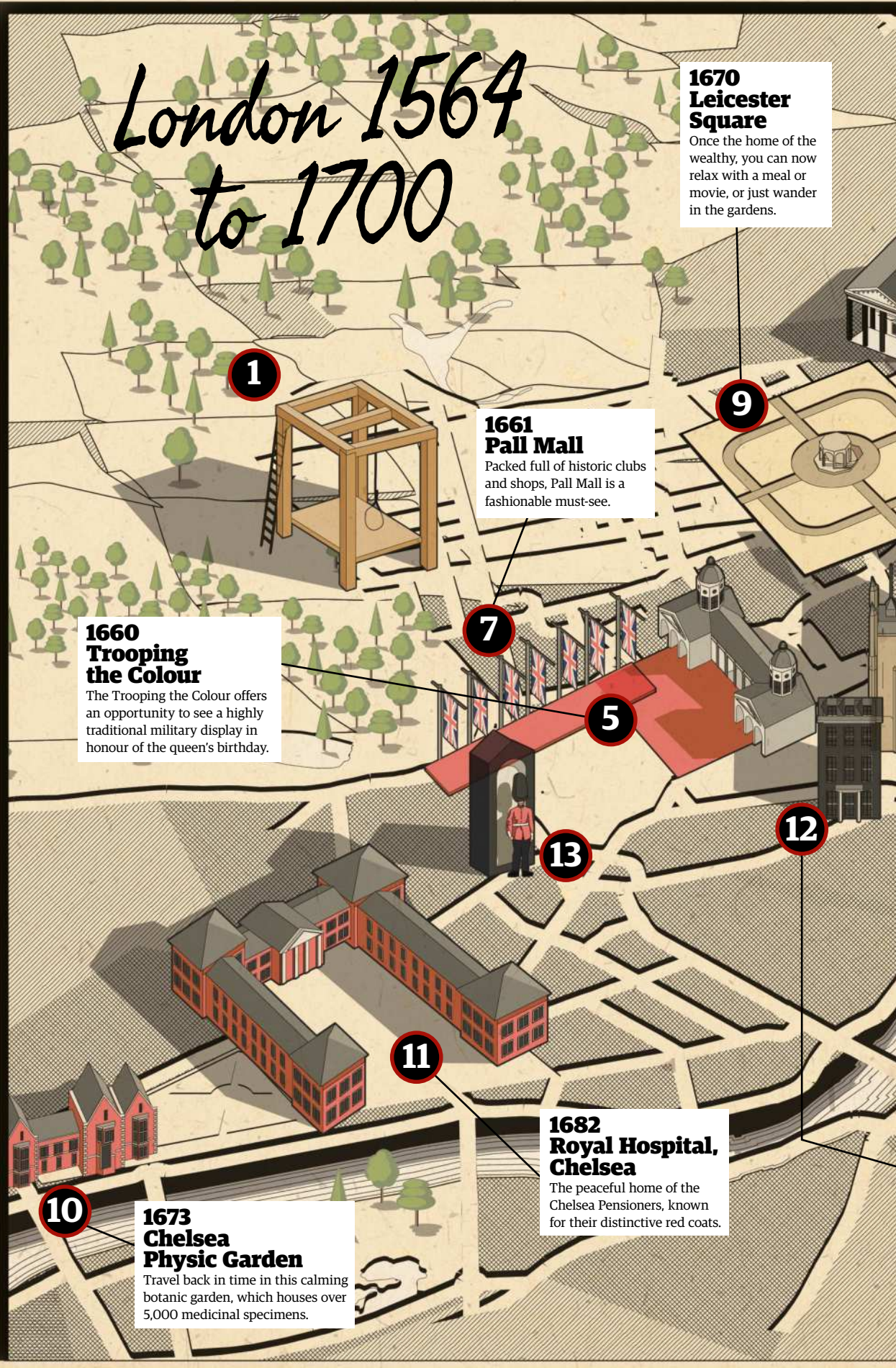


4. 1636 Goldsmiths' Hall is rebuilt

Though it is usually closed to the public, the opulent Goldsmiths' Hall holds regular open days on which visitors are welcome to attend. There's also the annual Goldsmiths' Fair, offering a chance to see the brightest and best jewellery designers working in Britain today.



London 1564 to 1700



1670 Leicester Square

Once the home of the wealthy, you can now relax with a meal or movie, or just wander in the gardens.

9

1661 Pall Mall

Packed full of historic clubs and shops, Pall Mall is a fashionable must-see.

7

1660 Trooping the Colour

The Trooping the Colour offers an opportunity to see a highly traditional military display in honour of the queen's birthday.

5

13

12

11

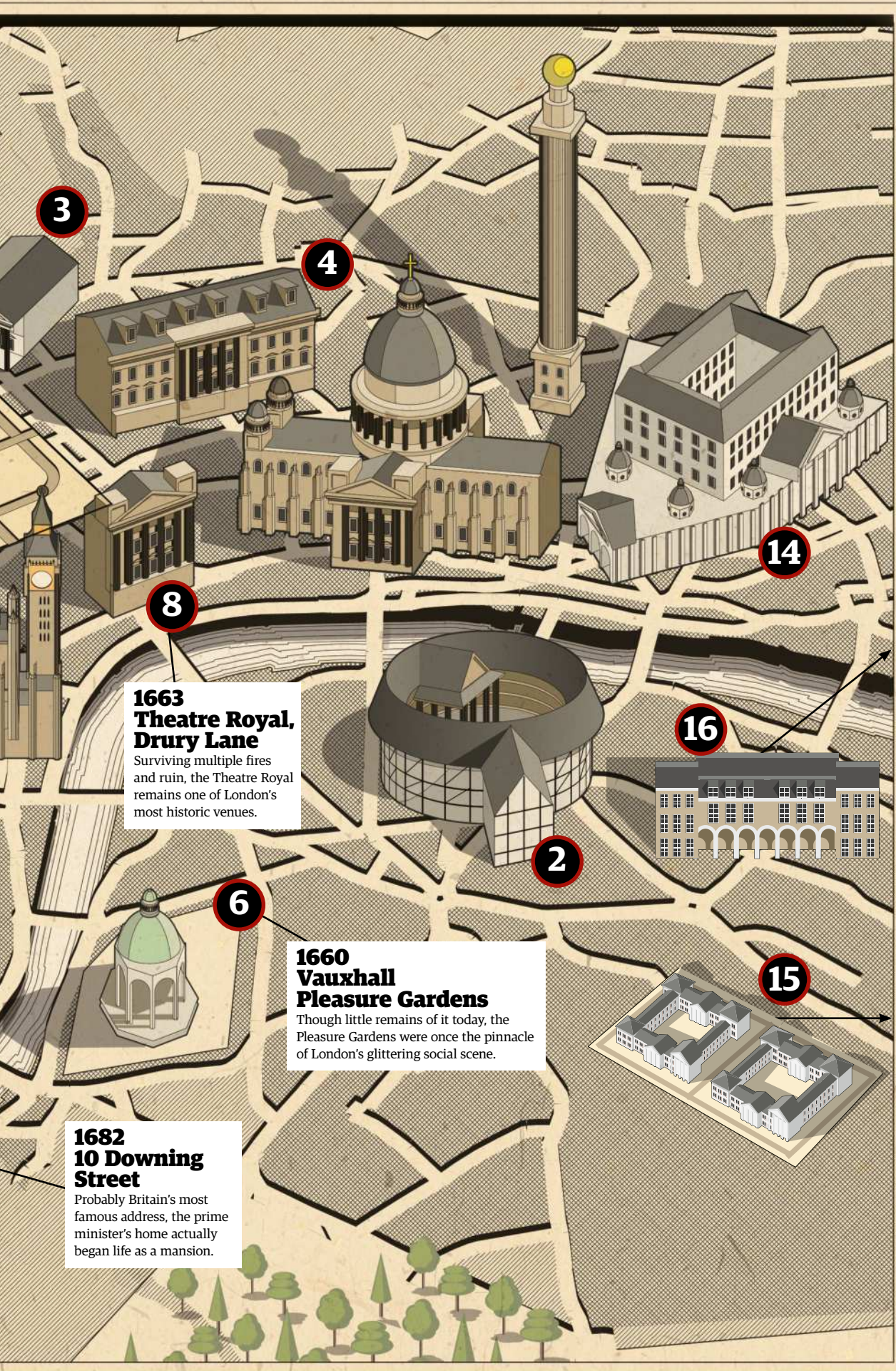
10

1673 Chelsea Physic Garden

Travel back in time in this calming botanic garden, which houses over 5,000 medicinal specimens.

1682 Royal Hospital, Chelsea

The peaceful home of the Chelsea Pensioners, known for their distinctive red coats.



1663 Theatre Royal, Drury Lane

Surviving multiple fires and ruin, the Theatre Royal remains one of London's most historic venues.

1660 Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens

Though little remains of it today, the Pleasure Gardens were once the pinnacle of London's glittering social scene.

1682 10 Downing Street

Probably Britain's most famous address, the prime minister's home actually began life as a mansion.

13. 1689 Changing of the Guard

This daily ritual is a favourite with visitors who flock to see the Buckingham Palace Life Guards hand over to their replacement sentries. From their distinctive bearskins to their red tunics, the Changing of the Guard is one of the iconic images of London.

14. 1694 Bank of England

The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street is the centre of banking in the United Kingdom. The bank has had several locations since it was established, but for nearly three centuries it has dominated Threadneedle Street and shows no signs of moving on.

15. 1694 Royal Hospital for Seamen, Greenwich

Part of the Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich, the Royal Hospital for Seamen was Mary II's way of thanking the sailors who had suffered for their country. While there, don't miss the newly restored Painted Hall at the Old College; it's a truly magnificent sight.

16. 1699 Billingsgate Fish Market

There's nothing fishy about the historic Billingsgate market. Once the largest fish market in the world, it's still a popular place for those who want to see London traders at their characterful best and don't mind a bit of a whiff.



London's royal palaces

Uncover London's eclectic mix of beautiful palaces, home to Britain's mad, bad and merry monarchs for hundreds of years

There is perhaps no other city in the world so rich in palatial history as London. From intriguing lost gems like the original Palace of Westminster, the first meeting place of the House of Commons, or the splendour of Whitehall, to the more familiar sights like Buckingham Palace, which today plays host to events of national celebration and mourning.

But royal palaces were designed not just to be luxurious homes for kings and queens; they were once symbols of power and status, designed

to outshine their European counterparts like Versailles or the Royal Palace of Madrid, and show off London as the greatest city in the world.

The palaces of London also offer insight into Britain's royal dynasties. The iconic front facade of Hampton Court Palace and its gardens reveal the grandeur of the Tudors, while the opulent Italian style of the Banqueting House, the only surviving part of the Palace of Whitehall, is surely a metaphor for the Stuart kings' desire to rule like Renaissance princes that ended in disaster.

Kensington Palace is perhaps the most understated of London's palaces. Its classic red bricks give it the feel of a simple London townhouse, evoking memories of the sanctuary that it became for Diana, Princess of Wales, after her marriage to Prince Charles collapsed. Buckingham Palace, on the other hand, is its foyle. At the end of the long mall, its neo-classical style - symmetrical and square - symbolises the authority, respect and traditionalism we associate with its current occupant.

Hampton Court Palace through the ages

Discover how Hampton Court was not just a palace for Henry VIII, but a masterpiece that lived on after he died

1515

● **Religious origins**
Wolsey builds Hampton on the site of a medieval preceptory for the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem.

1529

● **Henry takes over**
After Wolsey's fall, Henry takes over Hampton and turns it into a grand palace for himself and Anne Boleyn.

1537

● **Death of Queen Jane Seymour**
Henry VIII's favourite wife dies at Hampton Court. Henry orders her heart to be buried beneath the altar of the Chapel Royal.

1603

● **Shakespeare**
Shakespeare's troupe, The King's Men, perform to James I and Charles I in the Great Hall.

1689

● **William III invites Wren to transform Hampton**
William III asks Christopher Wren to work on a new Fountain Court and remodel the Clock Court.

Hampton Court Palace

Enter the inner sanctum of Britain's most controversial Tudor king

Hampton Court Palace was originally the residence of Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's most trusted advisor. Work began in 1514, and it soon became a lavish country retreat on the banks of the Thames, some 24 kilometres outside the capital. Wolsey worried that Henry would become jealous of how lavish the building was, so he ensured he was invited regularly. In 1529, as Wolsey struggled to secure Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon from the pope, he gifted Henry VIII his palace in a desperate attempt to save face, though he was later arrested.

As soon as he took it over, Henry began making improvements to Hampton Court. The most notable addition was perhaps the Great Hall.

This is one of the last medieval halls that has survived. It is draped in tapestries depicting the story of Abraham from the *Book of Genesis*, and features a hammer-beam roof. Another of Henry VIII's additions was the vaulted ceiling of the Chapel Royal. The contrast of the deep blue with the lavish gold evokes the night sky. Also dotted around the palace is the emblem of the Tudor dynasty: the red and white Tudor rose as well as symbols of several of Henry's wives.

At the centre of Hampton Court lies an astronomical clock, which tells the position of the tides, the Moon and signs of the zodiac. It would have been one of the biggest in the world at the time it was constructed.

Hampton Court Palace remains a link to splendour of medieval architecture and the characters who dwelled there



Royal family members

King Henry VIII

Hampton Court was the playground of England's most notorious monarch. It was in the royal apartments that the most important personal and political moments of his life took place. From the birth of his only legitimate son and heir, Edward VI (1537-53), to his decision to break with Rome and create the Church of England. His lust for romance and the arts can still be felt down every corridor.



Queen Anne Boleyn

Much of Hampton Court is a shrine to Henry's second wife. In the Great Hall there is an H and an A intertwined with lover's knots, though Henry had unfortunately carved the emblem of his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, into the stonework, so it can also be seen.



King George II

Hampton became the scene of political drama during the life of George II (1683-1760). As Prince of Wales, he felt badly treated by his father, and set up a rival court at the palace. Politicians used the rivalry for their own ends; the balance of power shifted away from the monarchy and to parliament. After he acceded the throne in 1727, he developed a similar relationship with his own son.



The ghost of Catherine Howard

Henry VIII's fifth marriage to Catherine Howard (c.1521-42), a maid of honour to his fourth, Anne of Cleves, soon began to fall apart when it was revealed that she had been sexually involved with other men prior to their relationship, a sin in the eyes of the king. When her alleged affair with the privy counsellor Thomas Culpeper was exposed, the king had her arrested at Hampton Court and executed for treason, without a trial.

The legend goes that upon her arrest, the fallen queen ran across a corridor into the Chapel Royal and begged Henry for mercy. Catherine's ghost is said to have been spotted running through the corridor, which has become known as the Haunted Gallery.



c.1700

● **The oldest maze in Britain**
Designed by Henry Wise and George London, the trapezoid-shaped maze at Hampton is the UK's oldest surviving hedge maze.

1702

● **William III's Privy Garden**
William commissioned a remodelling of the private gardens of Henry VIII complete with a Tjio screen made of wrought iron, but did not live to see them complete.

1760

● **Death of King George II**
King George was the last monarch to live at Hampton. His successors, particularly George IV, were more accustomed to royal residences closer to the capital.

1838

● **A public palace**
Queen Victoria has the gardens and state apartments opened up to the public for free.

Palace of Whitehall

This lost palace was the site of some of the most important constitutional moments in British history

The Palace of Whitehall was extended and adjusted many times over the course of its life. In fact, it was under construction so much that it was rarely fully furnished. At its peak, it covered a site of 23 acres and boasted more than 1,500 rooms, which was more than the Palace of Versailles or the Vatican. Those who saw it describe a jumbled mix of buildings in different styles, all joined together in a bit of a mess.

Rubens' ceiling

Perhaps the most decorated ceiling in the world, the Banqueting House plays host to a stunning series of paintings by Peter Paul Rubens. Commissioned by Charles I in 1629 and finished in 1634 as a tribute to his father, James I, they represent James almost as a deity. One panel shows James uniting the crowns of England and Scotland and being presented with the English crown by Minerva, while the largest panel depicts James's triumphal accession to heaven.



The Banqueting House is all that remains of the Palace of Whitehall, and is a resplendent sight, with its ceilings painted by Rubens

The first building on the site was known as York Place after it came into the possession of the Archbishop of York around 1240, in the reign of Henry III. It soon became a more splendid and larger palace than even that of Westminster Palace, the king's residence. So when Cardinal Thomas Wolsey fell from grace during the Reformation, Henry VIII was sure to seize it for himself and soon began a massive rebuilding programme to suit his grand tastes. Indeed, we can see aspects of his personal flourishes on Whitehall in the Holbein Gate, which connected the palace with the streets of London. It bears a striking resemblance to the West Front Entrance of Hampton Court Palace. Henry VIII also added a tiltyard for jousting tournaments, a tennis court, a bowling alley and a cockpit - for cockfights.

Henry VIII married Jane Seymour at Whitehall in May 1536, and it was here where he died in January 1547. Its next major occupant was his

second daughter, Queen Elizabeth I. In 1581 she had a series of makeshift tents constructed where she entertained a potential future husband, Francis, duke of Anjou, the son of King Henry II of France, though she ultimately rejected him and died without marrying.

Wanting somewhere more permanent to entertain guests, Elizabeth's successor, James I, set about building a permanent Banqueting House, though it was a temporary building. After his initial attempt burned down in 1619 he hired Inigo Jones, an architect who is matched perhaps only by Sir Christopher Wren, to design a new Banqueting House. Jones is believed to have travelled widely around Italy and Europe, and was heavily influenced by the Venetian architect, Andrea Palladio.

Indeed when Jones's Banqueting House opened in 1622, it was a style that, although a familiar sight all over Whitehall today, had never

"Henry VIII was sure to seize it for himself and began a massive rebuilding programme to suit his grand tastes"



Palace of Whitehall through the ages

Discover the extraordinary political events that shaped this long-lost royal gem

1240

York Place

The original palace, known as York Place, is acquired by the Archbishop of York.

1529

Henry VIII acquires Whitehall

York Place, owned by Cardinal Wolsey, is effectively seized by Henry VIII, who then expands it considerably.



1543

What's in a name?

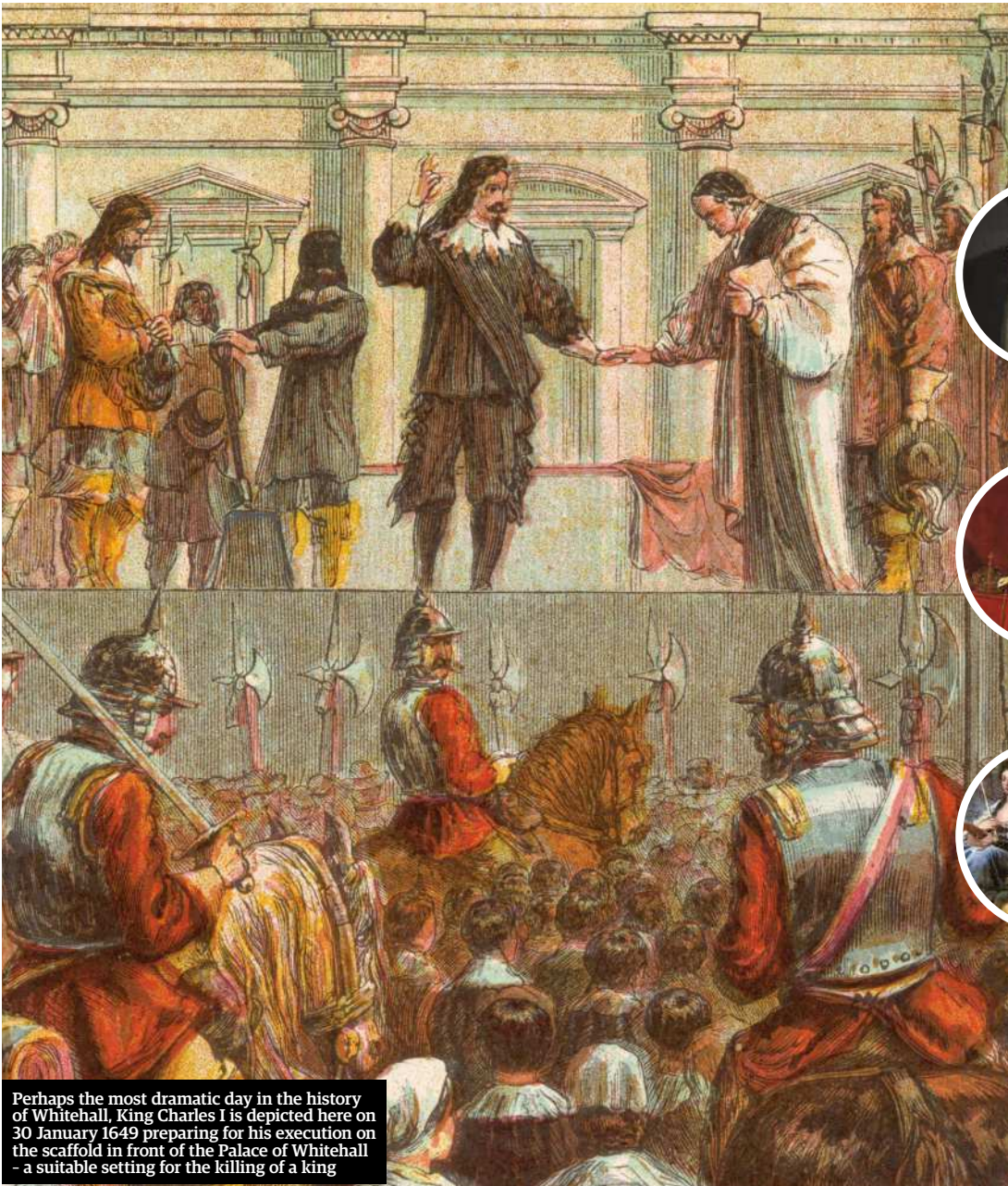
The name Whitehall, or Whytehole, first comes into general usage, probably referring to the white Portland stone of the exterior.

1605

Masques

The first masque - *The Masque Of Blackness* by Ben Jonson - is performed for James I in the Banqueting House.





Perhaps the most dramatic day in the history of Whitehall, King Charles I is depicted here on 30 January 1649 preparing for his execution on the scaffold in front of the Palace of Whitehall - a suitable setting for the killing of a king

Royal family members

King James I of England (VI of Scotland)



During James I's English reign (1603-25), Whitehall became the centre for courtly life. Lavish masques and plays were staged in the Banqueting House, written by writers such as Johnson and Shakespeare. James's children, his wife and sometimes even the king took part in the performances.

King Charles I



The reign of Charles I (1625-49) ended at Whitehall. Having been found guilty of governing like a tyrant by a tribunal, on 30 January he was led out of the Banqueting House onto a scaffold, where he was beheaded in front of crowds.

King William III & Queen Mary II of England



In the same place where the monarchy had dramatically been abolished in 1649, a new era in British constitutional history began in February 1689. In the Banqueting House, the Dutch Prince William of Orange and his wife, Mary, promised to uphold the Bill of Rights, a condition of them taking the throne.



The Holbein Gate, which connected the Palace of Whitehall to the streets of London

been seen before in Britain. It was extravagant, conjuring up images of Ancient Rome.

Below the Banqueting House itself is an undercroft, which, with its many curved arches, has an almost spooky feel in candlelight. James I used it as a drinking den for his many courtiers like George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, much to his son Charles's distaste.

Fire was a constant presence in the palace's life. The enchanting masques soon stopped in the reign of Charles I, as the smoke used in the performances threatened the newly installed ceiling paintings by Rubens. In 1698, a fire swept through the palace. William III, who had little love for Whitehall, asked just for the Banqueting House to be saved, which survives to this day.

1619

The first fire

The original Banqueting House burns to the ground and James I commissions Inigo Jones to rebuild it to his specifications.

1622

The Banqueting House rebuilt

The new Banqueting House is complete. It is more lavish than any other royal palace in London.



1649

An incorruptible crown

While waiting to be executed, Charles I famously proclaims: "I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown..."



1698

The Great Fire

A fire started by a maid sweeps through Whitehall, destroying the palace. The Banqueting House is all that survives the blaze.

© Aarny

Kensington Palace

Perhaps the least known of all royals palaces, this modest retreat played host to some fascinating royal characters

Kensington Palace, named after the area of London in which it was built, was originally the home of the Finch family, the earls of Nottingham. Parliament was perturbed by William III and Mary II's desire to move away from Whitehall, the seat of government, when they accepted the throne; the royal couple preferred Hampton Court, on the outskirts of London, which they were refurbishing. A compromise was arranged and they bought Nottingham's house as a more central residence.

Sir Christopher Wren was hired as the architect to update it at great speed, and the accounts show it cost around £60,000, a relatively modest sum. Though between 1691 and 1696 a further £35,000 was spent, and a fire in November 1691 also cost £6,000 to put right, so in total around £100,000 was spent on the palace.

Queen Anne moved in when she succeeded to the throne, and left much of the palace alone, though she did put great effort into the gardens and enlarged the grounds by taking land from Hyde Park. Kensington Palace was also the scene of explosive arguments between Queen Anne and her confident best friend, Lady Sarah Churchill. Churchill even threatened to publish the private letters they had exchanged if her demands were not met. In the end, the deep friendship, which had seen Queen Anne make Churchill's husband duke of Marlborough and gift her the funds to build the impressive Blenheim Palace, was irreparable.

After one final 'interview' in the staterooms at Kensington Palace, Lady Sarah was dismissed from court, and left the country not to return until George I had succeeded to the throne.

The first two King Georges spent a lot of time at Kensington Palace, and their influences can be seen particularly in the King's Apartments, especially the sparsely furnished Cupola Room. Opulent chandeliers dazzle in the limelight while images of Roman gods and great marble arches cover the walls and doorframes.

By the reign of George III, however, Kensington Palace was occupied intermittently by more junior members of the royal family, including his fourth son, Prince Edward, duke of Kent, whose premature death from pneumonia in 1820 left Kensington in the hands of his much maligned German wife, Princess Victoria, and his daughter, the future Queen Victoria.

Some of Kensington's more recent occupants include Princess Margaret, countess of Snowdon, the current Queen's sister, who held lavish parties with Elizabeth Taylor and even the Beatles. Today it is the residence of Prince William and Catherine, duchess of Cambridge, and their three children, Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis; as well as Prince Harry and Meghan, duchess of Sussex, while they prepare to take on more royal duties as the Queen cuts back her schedule and the duke of Edinburgh enjoys his retirement.

Kensington Palace has become a retreat for the royals - a place that is as close to a 'normal' home as they can expect



Princess Louise's statue of Queen Victoria was created in her art studio

A nation's grief

Following her divorce from Prince Charles, Diana, Princess of Wales, made Kensington Palace her home, where she could pursue her charity work with renewed vigour. But in August 1997, her life was cut short in a car accident in Paris. Kensington Palace became the focal point for the outpouring of grief that gripped the nation. The front gates were lined with rows of flowers and cards. There are plans to erect a statue of Diana in the public gardens.



Kensington Palace through the ages

Follow this modest royal retreat from William III to Princess Diana

1689

A new palace

William III makes his mark on England, purchasing a modest house from Daniel Finch, earl of Nottingham, for his new palace.



1714

Death of Queen Anne

Suffering a painful end, confined to her bed with violent convulsions, Queen Anne dies at Kensington, aged 49.



1714

George I takes the throne

George Ludwig, elector of Hanover, arrives in Britain to take the throne, and enjoys spending time at Kensington, his secondary palace.



1819

A future queen is born

Queen Victoria is baptised Princess Alexandrina Victoria of Kent in the Cupola room at Kensington Palace in June.

Royal family members

Prince Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex



Augustus (1773-1843) was a liberal in every sense of the word. Politically, he was at odds with his Tory father, and married in secret, without his approval. As president of the Society of Arts he hosted lavish receptions at Kensington, and invested heavily in the library, which held more than 50,000 books.

Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld



After her husband died, Victoria relied on her controlling favourite, John Conroy. Together they isolated her daughter, Victoria, from royal society, hoping to take power should she ascend to the throne prior to her 18th birthday.

Queen Victoria



Kensington was the scene of some of the most important moments in Queen Victoria's life (1819-1901). It was here, aged 18, she learned in her dressing gown that she was to take the throne of the largest empire in the world, and also where she first met Prince Albert.



Queen Anne commissioned the impressive gardens

"Opulent chandeliers dazzle in the limelight while images of Roman gods and great marble arches cover the walls"

1837

Victoria comes of age
After receiving news of her accession, Queen Victoria holds her first Privy Council meeting in the Red Saloon, Kensington.

1867

Queen Mary is born
Princess Mary of Teck, a distant German royal and future wife of George V, is born at Kensington.

1900s

The Aunt Heap
In the 20th century, Kensington was home to many minor royals. Edward VIII famously described it as an 'Aunt Heap'.

1995

Diana speaks
Princess Diana gives an explosive interview to the BBC from Kensington, accusing Prince Charles of an affair with Camilla Parker Bowles.



2017

Queen of Hearts
Twenty years after her death, Kensington Palace's gates are showered with flowers for Diana once again.

© Alamy/Getty Images

Buckingham Palace

How this modest country house became the focal point of an empire

We don't know the exact origins of the first house on Buckingham Palace's site, though we do know the land on the site was boggy and akin to that of a marsh, because the River Tyburn flows through the area, though this has now been diverted to flow underneath the palace.

The first mention of a house on the land was during the reign of James I. It soon became the residence of the Duke of Buckingham, who demolished it to create a superior residence known as Buckingham House. This house had elaborate black gates, a fountain of the god Neptune in its forecourt, and statues lining the roof.

George III purchased it for his wife, Queen Charlotte, and their children, and remodelled it at a cost of £73,000, removing many of the ornate features, creating a much more conservative house.

As his childhood home, George III's son, George IV, was very fond of Buckingham House, and when he ascended the throne, he commissioned a further more expensive extension. George IV was known for over indulging and extravagant spending, so it is perhaps no surprise that John Nash, the architect the king hired, exceeded his budget significantly, and was subsequently dismissed by the prime minister when George IV died in 1830. Building work continued under the reign of William IV, but the palace was not completed until his 18-year-old niece, Victoria, came to the throne.

The palace Queen Victoria inherited, however, was very different from the residence we know today. There were just three wings, not four, and so the space that today serves as the quadrangle was once the front drive, with the back wing serving as the main entrance. The towering Marble Arch was also part of the original frontage and fitted with the original style, which was classical and extravagant, reminiscent of the statues that adorned the roof of the original Buckingham House.

Some of the most impressive rooms in the palace include the Centre Room, which is oriental



Buckingham Palace is both a working site for the royals and a tourist destination

in style - full of elaborately decorated pottery and golden dragons embossed into the ceiling and the wall patterns, much of it taken from the Brighton Pavilion - and the many state rooms. These are the official rooms of state where the Queen and other royals host guests during official events. Perhaps the most impressive state rooms are the Throne Room, draped in red, which houses the thrones used in the Queen's coronation and previous coronations, and the Ballroom, opened in 1855 and

draped in chandeliers. This is the room often used for investitures (the formal bestowing of honours such as MBEs). But perhaps the most iconic feature of Buckingham Palace is the sweeping grand staircase that curves around a bronze statue of Perseus and Medusa, a replica of a Florentine statue from 1545. Queen Victoria adorned the walls of the staircase with portraits of her close family, including her parents, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and her aunt, Queen Adelaide.

Buckingham Palace through the ages

Trace the surprising Jacobean roots of this national institution

c.1600

● Silkworms

James I issues a royal patronage to the site of Buckingham Palace's gardens for the cultivation of silkworms.

1703

● Buckingham House

The Duke of Buckingham builds a house where the present palace now sits. This is how it gets its name.



1761

● A house fit for a queen

George III purchases Buckingham House as a residence for his wife, Queen Charlotte, and it becomes known as The Queen's House.

1837

● A palace not quite fit for a queen

After years of extravagant renovations started by George IV and John Nash, Queen Victoria moves in but soon complains that it isn't spacious enough.

Royal family members

Albert, Prince Consort

Prince Albert (1819-61) married Queen Victoria in 1840, three years after she had ascended the throne, and moved in to Buckingham Palace. He was involved in Edward Blore's plans for a new front facade; indeed it was he who suggested the idea of the now famous balcony.



King George VI

A shy, retiring man, George VI (1895-1952) took the throne and moved in to Buckingham Palace in 1936 following the abdication of his brother. The new monarch and his wife, Elizabeth, were known to find the palace uninviting but they remained in London with their people, even at the height of World War II.



Queen Elizabeth II

Buckingham Palace's longest serving resident, Elizabeth II (1926-present), first moved in when she was ten upon her father's accession to the throne. During the VE celebrations, she sneaked out, unnoticed, among the crowds that gathered around the Victoria Memorial. She returned here from Kenya as queen in 1952.



Surviving the Blitz

During World War II, the Nazis bombed London in a campaign designed to dampen morale. On 7 August 1940, more than 1,000 German planes crossed the channel, the largest fleet ever seen. Although the bombing was strategic, hitting sites such as Tilbury Docks, some major landmarks - Buckingham Palace included - were hit. On 13 September 1940, the Luftwaffe bombed the quadrangle of the palace while King George VI and Queen Elizabeth were inside, and they narrowly escaped death.



1846

● **Expanding**
Queen Victoria persuades parliament to sell Brighton Pavilion to fund a new fourth wing, designed by Edward Blore, creating the famous quadrangle.

1852

● **Marble Arch finds a new home**
After building works are complete, Marble Arch is moved from the palace and to the corner of Hyde Park.



1913

● **A new facade**
The gothic-looking facade of the fourth wing is altered and refaced using Portland Stone.

1962

● **The Queen's Gallery**
A public gallery is opened in the bombed ruins of the Private Chapel, showcasing a priceless collection of art.

1993

● **The palace opens its doors**
The queen agrees that she will open Buckingham Palace to paying guests for the first time during August and September.

River Thames frost fairs

Discover the carnivals that broke out on the ice when the River Thames was turned into a winter wonderland

Sometimes Londoners called it the 'Blanket Fair', other times 'Freezeland Street', 'City Road' or, rather grandiosely, 'Frostiana'. But from 1309 to 1814, whenever the River Thames froze solid, an elaborate carnival would break out the ice.

So roll up, roll up! Enter London's lost frost fairs to discover a tent city of hastily assembled shops and pubs, circus performers and a wide variety of games. The rival of any royal extravaganza, expect customers from every strata of society, with more than one monarch making an appearance.

But be warned – its unique position also puts it outside of any authority's jurisdiction, so there are no police to break up fights or catch pickpockets.

The ice is also prone to suddenly crack, drowning more than one reveller in the depths below. But this just means the fair-goers to this once-in-a-generation event party like there's no tomorrow.

London's frost fairs were a side effect of the Little Ice Age. While you might associate ice ages with cavemen and woolly mammoths, this one affected the world's climate from the time of the Black Death until the Industrial Revolution. There are earlier accounts of the Thames freezing, such as in 695 and 1092, but these were one-offs. During the Little Ice Age, "the great streams [of England] were congealed" much more frequently.

The Little Ice Age's causes are debated but are believed to have been a perfect storm for climate

cooling – huge volcanic eruptions at a time when the Sun was experiencing unusually low sunspot activity. This meant that while the Sun was already giving off less energy to warm the Earth's surface, much of it was being reflected back into space by great plumes of volcanic ash lingering in the stratosphere.

While mean annual temperatures dipping by 0.6°C (1.1°F) across the Northern Hemisphere may not sound a lot, it had a dramatic impact. Europe was particularly affected as atmospheric patterns also blew Arctic air over the continent. Alpine glaciers expanded, obliterating farms and villages in Switzerland, France and elsewhere; Norse colonies in Greenland collapsed after they were





The Thames freezing put many Londoners out of work, including the city's watermen

cut off by sea ice; frequent cold winters and wet summers led to crop failures; and North Atlantic cod fisheries fled south to warmer waters.

However, while the overall trend was towards the world growing colder from the 14th century until the late 17th century, temperatures still fluctuated year on year. This meant a frost fair on the Thames was not guaranteed each winter and when it did happen, it might last for weeks or just a few days. In fact, there were only 24 known winters during the Little Ice Age in which the portion of the Thames that snakes through London was recorded to have frozen over. On only a handful of those occasions was it was thick enough to host a fair so, with few exceptions, the fairs occurred just once in a generation.

The coldest winter in Britain during this time was the Great Frost of 1683-84. The Thames froze for ten weeks, with ice as thick as 28 centimetres (11 inches). Trees split as if hit by lightning and boats were crushed by the pressure of the ice. Beyond London, there were reports of solid ice extending for miles off the coasts of the southern North Sea, while the ground was frozen to depths of 69 centimetres (27 inches) near Manchester and 1.2 metres (4 feet) in Somerset.

Another factor that contributed specifically to the Thames freezing in the capital was the building of the Old London Bridge. Finished in 1205, this crossing was the main route to ferry people, goods and livestock from the City of London to Southwark for 600 years. But this Medieval bridge was supported by 19 closely packed arches, each boasting large piers known as starlings, and their breakwaters slowed the river down, making it more susceptible to freezing.

Large pieces of ice would also lodge among the arches, gradually blocking them and acting like a dam, preventing salty seawater to pass up the river that would have otherwise lowered the freezing point. Whether it was because the frozen river was thickest near the bridge or due to it being in the heart of the city, it was around



Thomas Wyke's illustration of the colourful 1683-84 frost fair

"Enter London's lost frost fairs to discover a tent city of hastily assembled shops and pubs"

this area that the city's frost fairs would generally be held.

In 1309, an anonymous chronicler noted that the Thames froze at Christmas "and it lasted so long that people danced in the midst of it near a fire." However, the first fair of significance opened on 21 December 1564 and lasted through to January. Raphael Holinshed recorded boys playing football "as boldlie [sic] there as if it had been on the drie [sic] land."

The frozen Thames must have been a wondrous sight, stretching for miles in all directions but the seizing up of the city's main artery also put many livelihoods at risk. Brewers, bakers and washerwomen all struggled without a source of running water. However, the worst hit were the watermen, who transported people along the river in little boats. It's thought they established the frost fairs out of necessity.

In 1621, the freeze lasted for eight weeks, so the out-of-work watermen guarded at the water-stairs, charging Londoners who wanted to step on the ice. Audaciously, another set of watermen would then charge them again when they got off on the opposite bank.

With this in mind, the watermen also set up a number of attractions to lure customers onto the river. They converted their boats into makeshift sleds to carry customers along the ice and sold food and drink from tents made of blankets resting upon crossed oar frames. It is unclear

if this was the first time the watermen had organised a fair themselves or if they were doing as their predecessors had in previous years.

It wasn't long before others cashed in. Hackney coachmen drove their horses out onto the ice to compete for custom on the new white highway. Traders set up their own booths and stalls, selling goods superior to anything the watermen could produce. Soon they had an entire street of primitive shops on the river.

In 1683, the Watermen's Company appealed to the Court of Aldermen for help. They argued that as their guild had been given royal assent to operate the country's waterways, they should have a monopoly on all river trade – including the frost fairs. While they had their sympathisers, the ethos of individualism and competition emerging at the close of the 17th century meant the court ruled against them. That winter saw the river host one of the largest frost fairs on record.

Known as the Blanket Fair, it lasted from December 1683 to February 1684. A double row of booths stretched from Temple Stairs to the South Bank. Oxen and "Lapland mutton" spit roasts drew crowds and stalls sold spiced buns, hot pudding pies and gingerbread, while costermongers wandered around selling fruits and nuts. In the makeshift taverns you could get warming luxuries like coffee and hot chocolate, but customers would be welcomed with the greeting "What lack ye, sir? Beer, ale or brandy?"

01 Archery on ice

The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, went out on the ice every day when the river froze in 1564 to shoot targets. This year also saw the first proper frost fair, where royal courtiers mixed with London's commoners.

02 Printing press

Printers were a popular attraction at many frost fairs, printing customers' names onto commemorative souvenirs. While early fair-goers were mostly illiterate and settled for simple postcards, by 1814 ballads and books were sold on the ice.

03 Marching elephant

While the 1814 fair only lasted a few days, some modern sources have claimed that the ice was so strong that "a very fine elephant was led across the Thames a little below Blackfriars Bridge". However, there is little contemporary evidence to back up this extraordinary assertion.

04 Animal baiting

Bear-baiting, bull-baiting and the curious if cruel-sounding 'men throwing at cocks' were among the more bloodthirsty entertainments available at the fair.

05 Fox hunting

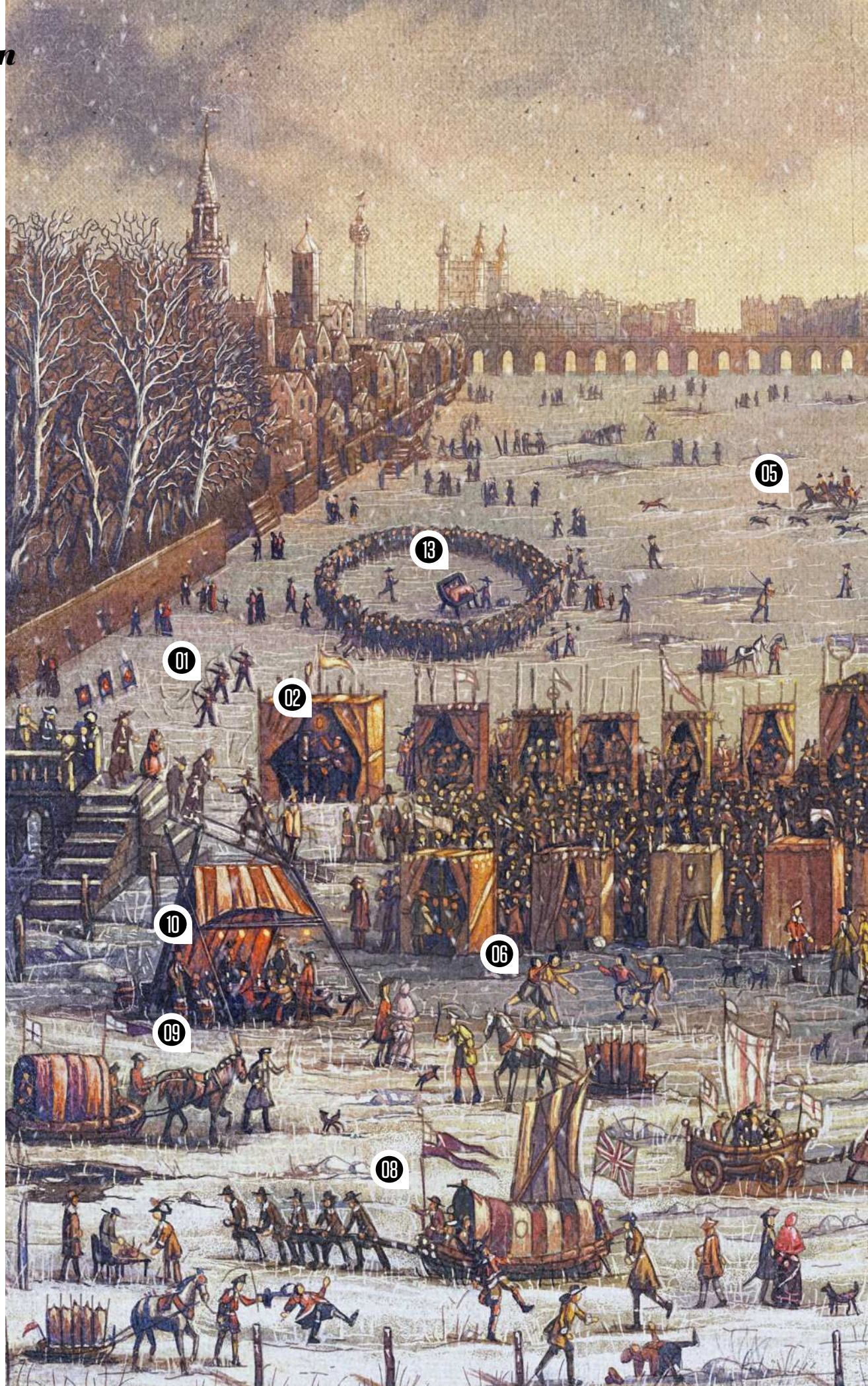
The river hosted a foxhunt in 1683-84, though it's unclear if the animal was wild or trapped and released for the sport. Some have suggested Charles II participated but this seems unlikely.

06 Winter sports

There are several accounts of football being played on the ice during the fairs, along with hockey, nine-pin bowling, and horse and donkey racing.

07 Fairground attractions

Adding to the carnival feel, large wooden swings that could hold up to six revellers were a common sight at frost fairs in 18th century.



River Thames frost fairs

08 Ride the draw boat

Fair-goers could ride in boats fitted with wheels and decorated with streamers. These could be blown along using sails or pulled with ropes by the out-of-work watermen.

09 One-horse open sleigh

While Henry VIII travelled from central London to Greenwich by sleigh along the frozen river in 1536, hackney coach drivers frequently taxied ordinary Londoners along the ice as well.

10 Temporary taverns

Frost fairs boasted "more liquor than the fish beneath do drink", with stalls selling beer, ale, brandy and gin. Others established temporary taverns with benches to sit on.

11 Beware thin ice

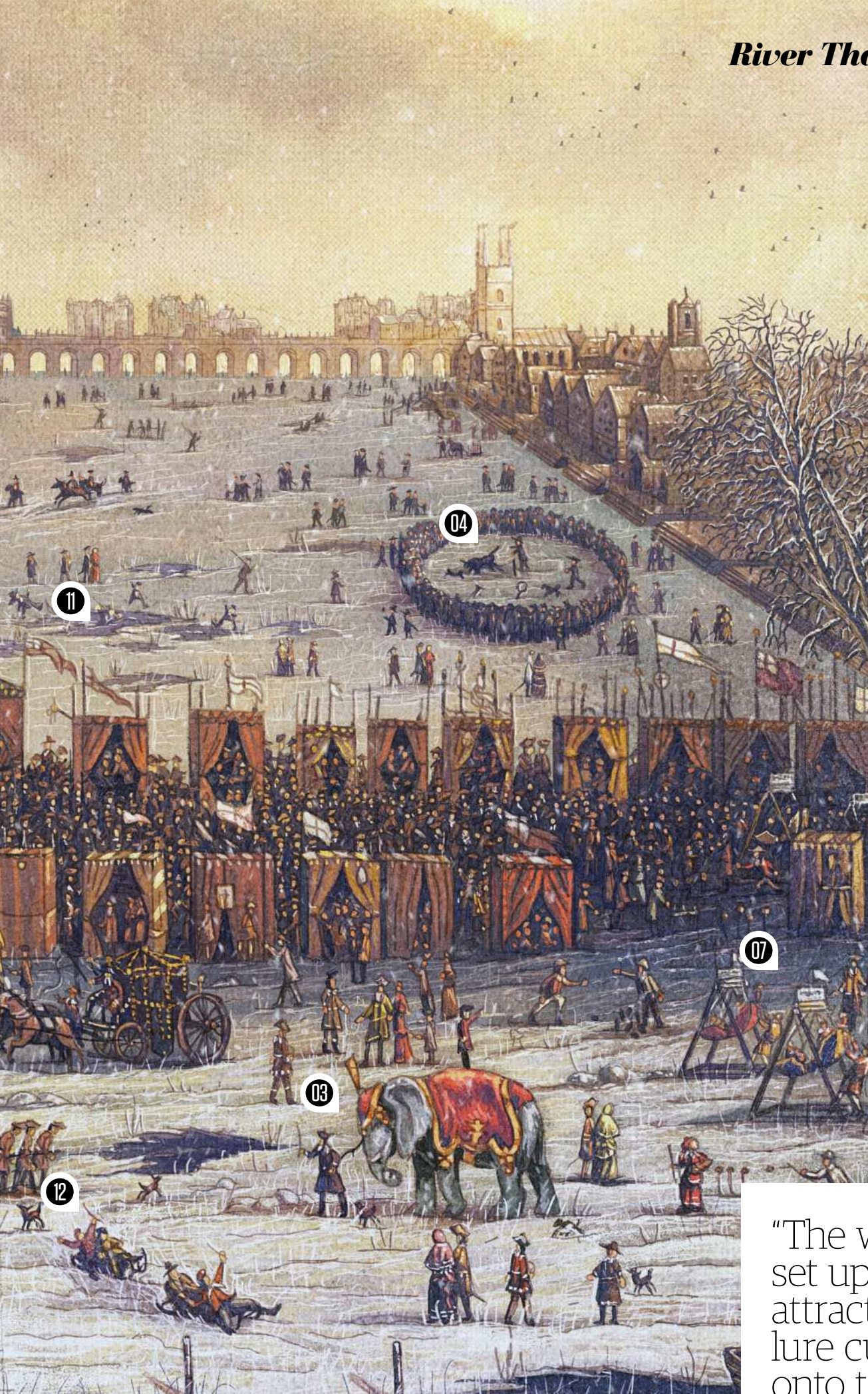
As well as the risk of slipping over, many Londoners drowned when the ice cracked. In 1739, a large sheet collapsed as the river defrosted, swallowing up several tents full of people.

12 Ice skating

Before the invention of iron skates in 1667, London's youth tied animal bones to their feet and reportedly reached "a velocity equal to the flight of a bird".

13 Roasting ox

As well as stalls selling gingerbread, hot pudding pies and spiced apples, revellers could warm themselves while watching the spectacles such as the roasting of a sheep or a whole ox.



"The watermen also set up a number of attractions to lure customers onto the river"

Dangers on the ice

Hazel Forsyth from the Museum of London warns that walking on the frozen river came with risks

How did the Thames freezing affect London?

The rarity of the event caused people to enjoy it but the reality was rather different for the economy. A large amount of London's goods were transported via the river, either through coastal trade or small vessels carrying cargo to and from ocean-going ships.

The ease of transporting heavy or perishable goods was very profound and affected everyone. Unless people had stockpiled in anticipation, they were probably suffering severe hardship. The City made attempts to stockpile fuel in various warehousing across London but those supplies dwindled from time to time. Of course, whenever you have a shortage of anything, prices go up, so those who were less able to afford things would have been more impoverished. Communication would also have been very difficult.

What did the frozen river look like?

The paintings in our collection suggest it looked almost like an Arctic landscape with vast, sort of jagged piles of ice. People have tended to say 'this is just a load of nonsense, but it can't possibly have been like that'. But actually if you look at the way pack ice forms, I think it's very accurate.

How much of the River Thames froze?

To be honest, we don't know as there isn't detailed enough information. It's fair to say it froze between the City of London and Westminster – beyond that, it's very difficult to know. The likelihood is that the river was fairly solid in both directions but there may have been gaps and so much would have depended on local conditions. If it was fairly windy, ice could break up and then harden again downstream. The fact that the Thames froze didn't mean it was all solid and possible to stand on – only patches were strong enough.

Did many people fall through the ice?

Every time [the river froze], people stepped onto the ice thinking it was stronger than it really was and suffered as a consequence. There were lots of broken bones, dunkings and fatalities.

One of the most famous deaths was recorded in John Gay's poem *Trivia*. It's about the fate of a fruit vendor who apparently staggered under the weight of her great basket of hot apples and disappeared below the ice. He said, "Her head, chopt off, from her lost shoulders flies". Then there's this rather dramatic account of "And pip-pip-pip- along the ice resounds" as her hot pippins bobbed against the ice.

Did any fair booths get caught unawares?

There was a booth set up by Mister Laurence of Queenhithe, near Brooke Wharf, at the 1814 fair. I guess he thought two men could guard it overnight, leaving them with some gin and some other bits and pieces to keep them going. In the morning there were reportedly nine people inside [the tent], then the ice started to break apart and move downstream. They escaped by climbing onto the piers at Blackfriars Bridge and a couple of adjacent barges. They were very fortunate.



The Old London Bridge contributed to the Thames freezing over

"Frost fairs were as much like an illegal rave or a circus as they were a Christmas market"

Hawkers sold souvenirs from simple trinkets and children's toys to golden jewellery. Some forward-thinking businessmen also used the fair as a publicity stunt. Barbers demonstrated that even on ice their razors would not slip and a printer set up their press in the open air.

The press proved particularly successful, selling poems that customers could also have their names printed on. The diarist John Evelyn noted with astonishment "twas estimated the printer gained about £5 a day for printing a line onely [sic] at sixpence a name, besides what he got by ballads." Meanwhile, the watermen barely managed to scrape by while fending off the Water Bailiff, who was trying to tax their little booths.

In 1599, William Shakespeare's theatre company dismantled their old playhouse in Shoreditch and transported the wooden frame over the Thames, reassembling it as the Globe in Southwark. The story goes that the actors hauled the timbers across the icy river in the dead of night. The Bard wrote *Much Ado About Nothing* the same year, so you can imagine the actor playing Don Pedro declaring, "Good morrow, Bendeick. Why, what's the matter, / That you have such a February face, / So full of frost, of storms and cloudiness?" to a fair-goers who knew just how cold that look must have been. But although the Thames was "nigh frozen over" the night they moved to the Globe, they went by boat – the ice was too thin to stand on. There's sadly no account of Shakespeare or his players capitalising on the frost fairs. However, others certainly did.

As one souvenir handbill from 1684 read: "Behold the wonder of this present age / A frozen river now becomes a stage." While food and drink were popular attractions, frost fairs were as much like an illegal rave or a circus as they were a Christmas market. Music blared, entertainers recited bawdy verse and puppet shows were held. A "human salamander" seemingly ate glowing hot coals, sword-swallowers amazed audiences, an astrologer calling himself 'Icedore Frostiface of Freeseland' read fortunes, and figures on stilts wandered among the crowds.

A menagerie of exotic animals was also on display, ranging from a dog that could do tricks, to a cage full of monkeys, to "a booth with a phenix [sic] on it." One such exhibitor in 1684 was James William Chipperfield, whose family developed the Chipperfield Circus into an elaborate show that endured until the 1950s.

As well as sledging and skating, there were also games you could pay to play. Along with nine-pin bowling and hoopla, Londoners enjoyed the dizzy experience of a 'Dutch whimsie' – being spun around in a chair or a boat tied to a pole. Every roundabout in modern playgrounds is thought to be a descendent of this "whirling sledge".

John Evelyn called the 1684 fair a "bacchanalian triumph, or carnival on the water", while his equally prudish contemporary Roger Morrice complained, "All manner of debauchery upon the Thames continued upon the Lord's Day and Monday". Fair-goers could gamble and likely placed wagers on regular attractions like horse



racing and blood sports. As well as seeing bears and bulls fight dogs, "throwing at cocks" was promoted at the 1684 fair. This involved a rooster being tied to a post and participants taking turns to throw weighted sticks at the bird until it died.

Prostitutes also ambled among the attractions, soliciting customers. The beleaguered watermen complained about women plying their trade in the Hackney coaches but it's likely some of the tents served as brothels. With the waterman offering the only thing close to security, revellers had to watch out for pickpockets, too.

While Evelyn and Moore bemoaned the frost fair as a sign of social decay, others praised it for breaking down hierarchies. An event to rival any royal extravaganza, high society couldn't resist the fun and games and even the poorest could at least enjoy the spectacle and get warm by a bonfire.

The dramatist Thomas Dekker noted the mixing "of all ages, of both sexes, of all professions" on the "common path" of the Thames in 1608. John Taylor, a part-time poet and possibly the only waterman to praise the frozen river, wrote approvingly, "Laws they count no more than Esops [sic] fables." Perhaps this was because of the frozen Thames' unique position outside of conventional authority's jurisdiction, the fair's overwhelming carnivalesque atmosphere, or because the ice was impermanent, so it was understood to only be a temporary suspension of social etiquette.

Despite the behaviour the fairs encouraged, even royalty couldn't resist. Queen Elizabeth I walked upon the ice daily in 1564 to "shoot a few marks" with bow and arrow. King Charles II went one step further at the Blanket Fair, attending with some of the royal family to see "Great Britain's wonder" on 31 January 1684. He even bought a memento from one of the printers, stamped with the date and their names. A French account claimed the Merry Monarch spent a whole night

at the fair, while others say he joined in a foxhunt on the ice. Perhaps while accompanying the king, the royal army also fired a ceremonial salute with several cannons on the ice.

There were more frost fairs in the 18th century and they offered much the same attractions. In 1715, live entertainment was provided by "Will Ellis the Poet and his wife Bess" who were "Rhiming [sic] on the Hard Frost." Ox was again roasted by a Mr Atkins and Mr Hodgkinson, who claimed to be the descendents of the gentleman who had done the same in 1684. The painter William Hogarth bought a souvenir print for his pet pug, Trump. However, these later fairs also saw greater mechanisation, so the fairground attractions looked more like today's with swing sets and – sources claim – some sort of clockwork car went on display.

The final fair was held in February 1814 and though it only lasted a few days, it went out in style. The ice followed a thick fog that enveloped the city and the surrounding country, allegedly lasting from 27 December 1813 to 3 January 1814.

Once it cleared, a grand mall was set-up by Blackfriars Bridge, dubbed 'City Street', boasting temporary taverns with names such as 'The City of Moscow', 'The Free and Easy' and 'Wellington Forever'. At least ten printers were set up, and they sold books with their postcards and poems, while a full-blown casino offered roulette and a wheel of fortune. The watermen assumed their old position, charging twopence or threepence for safe passage onto the ice. As the Londoners descended onto the frozen Thames en masse once more, a group of 70 people reportedly

walked across the frozen water to South Bank all at once.

Various modern accounts claim that an elephant walked across the ice at the final fair. While we would like to say this was led by a descendent of the Blanket Fair's James William Chipperfield, whose family's circus was now a booming success, the story may sadly be apocryphal. There are no known records from 1814 mentioning the animal, which would surely have been a talking point.

The fair lasted just four days as so many people and milder temperatures caused cracks to quickly appear in the ice. More than one person drowned and booths were carried away on ice flows. Damage to river barges was estimated at some £20,000, caused by giant fast-flowing chunks that had broken up. But even then, a large printing press, hungry for profits, was set up in defiance on an ice island near Westminster.

The Thames did freeze again after 1814 but not to the extent that anyone could walk on it. The Little Ice Age was drawing to a close, ending after 1850, but the frost fairs were also a victim of progress. The Old London Bridge was beyond repair and had to be replaced in 1830 by the modern London Bridge. This, plus the creation of the Embankment in the 19th century, created a narrower, faster-flowing Thames that was less likely to freeze.

London's lost frost fairs were always a celebration of impermanence, with participants never sure when the party would be over or when the floor was going to give way beneath their feet. We could never expect them to last forever.

The souvenir Charles II bought at the Blanket Fair. Hans in Kelder ('Jack in the Cellar') is a wry reference to Princess Anne's pregnancy

CHARLES, KING.
JAMES DUKE.
KATHARINE, QUEEN.
MARY DUTCHESS.
ANN, PRINCESSE
GEORGE, PRINCE.
HANS IN KELDER.

London: Printed by G: Croom. on the ICE, on
the River of Thames, January 31. 1684.

A tale of one city: Dickensian London

London was not simply the city in which Charles Dickens lived but also his inspiration, obsession and lead character in his novels

Midnight in London, the streets are dimly lit by flickering gas lamps, and mysterious alleyways are consumed by darkness. A lone figure walks the cobblestone pathways, the cold light hitting the brim of his hat. He has already wandered the streets for hours, covering 15 miles of the city, and home is five more away. But this wanderer is not a traveller returning home from a long journey; this man walks the streets by choice, observing every single aspect of the city, and pouring its very being directly into his work.

Despite his strong connection to the city, Charles Dickens was not actually born in London. He was born as the second of eight children in Portsmouth, and did not move to the capital until he was nearly three years old, but it would quickly become the central city of his life and the driving force of many of his great literary works.

Dickens' childhood, and his relationship with the city, was one of halves. For most of his youth he lived an almost idyllic life. Mingling with the upper classes, his family was wealthy and respected, and he attended private school. However in the summer of 1822, life as he knew it came crashing down. His father, after amounting massive debts, was forced into the Marshalsea debtors prison with his wife and young children. The 12-year-old Charles had to rent a room, leave school and go to work for ten hours a day at a boot polish factory.

Despite how unfortunate this turn of events was, it thrust the naïve, wide-eyed boy into the brutal reality of the London of the era, and he was able to observe the city, and its residents, with a curious, outsider's view. Britain was gripped in the height of the Industrial Revolution, and though

the capital did experience the benefits, it was also suffering terrible consequences. A huge influx of souls poured into the capital from the new railroads, and the city swelled with an additional 3.5 million people over 80 years. The rapid growth placed upper and middle class neighbourhoods beside areas of great poverty and astonishing filth. The streets were overcrowded, and the thousands of horse-drawn carriages left mountains of manure, which stank in the midday sun. The new factories pumped out coal smoke, which darkened the sky and settled upon buildings and people. The city attracted every kind of person, from the rich elite, to prostitutes, beggars and pick-pockets looking for easy money.

For those who had lived in the deprived areas their whole life, this was the status quo, but Dickens was astounded and disgusted by what he saw. He even found a difference in the polluted rain that fell on the city, as in this quote from *Little Dorrit*: "In the country, the rain would have developed a thousand fresh scents, and every drop would have had its bright association with some beautiful form of growth or life. In the city, it developed only foul stale smells, and was a sickly, lukewarm, dirt-stained, wretched addition to the gutters." Indeed, London of the period was a city that had been consumed by industrialisation and was growing at such an alarming rate that it did not quite know how to deal with this. It wasn't until the second half of the 19th century that Londoners stopped drinking water from the same parts of the Thames that sewage was being emptied into. The London that Dickens was thrust into was one undergoing the fastest growth and most dramatic changes in history, and for him it quickly became a fascination.





Dickens had another unusual interest: the paranormal, and he was one of the first members of The Ghost Club

For a rich boy turned poor, Dickens became very involved in the Victorian methods for 'dealing' with the poor. The New Poor Law in 1834 meant that workhouses were created for those unable to pay their debts. Despite being painted as 'relief', these brutal places were akin to prisons for the underprivileged, separating families and denying basic human rights. Dickens, due to his father's imprisonment, interacted intimately with the workhouses, and particularly Marshalsea, and his feelings about the atrocities of the system seeped into his novels. Much of *Little Dorrit*, for example, is set in the prison, as well as the surrounding areas, such as the church of St George the Martyr and

the New Poor Law within it, saying the poor were given a choice of "being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it." For all their colourful characters and charm, Dickens' novels were driven by a desire to show the rest of London, and even the country, the horrendous conditions the poor were suffering under in the city. They were a social commentary that aimed to give a voice to those unable to speak for themselves.

For as much as Dickens was critical of the squalor of the poor and the conditions they were living in, he was fascinated with the city. He walked two miles to work at Warren's Blacking

"Dickens became intimately involved in the lives of the poor in London"

The George Inn. In the novel, the titular character's father is stuck in the prison with debts so complex nobody can work out how to gain his freedom. This was the reality for many of London's debtors at the time, who found themselves unable to break out of the cycle of poverty that the rapidly expanding city had created for them.

Due to his work at the blacking factory, and his habit of frequenting the public houses of London, Dickens became intimately involved in the lives of the poor in London, and he portrayed their plight in his novels to raise awareness to those more fortunate. *Oliver Twist* focused almost entirely on the effect of poverty, and the injustice suffered by adults and children alike. Dickens even mocked

Factory, crossing the Thames via Blackfriars Bridge and ending just off the Strand where modern day Charing Cross Station stands. Dickens quickly became a walkaholic, spending hours covering from five to 30 miles through the city a day, by his own reckoning at a pace of four-and-a-half miles per hour. The landscape he observed and studied with his photographic memory fed into his novels, and provided inspiration for some of the most colourful and poignant insights into the 'real' Victorian London that exist today, "streets and courts [that] dart in all directions, until they are lost in the unwholesome vapour which hangs over the house-tops and renders the dirty perspective uncertain and confined."

Dickens' London

Many of Dickens' most famous and beloved works took place on the streets of the city he walked every day and night



There was so much hype around the series that fans stormed the New York docks demanding to know if Nell lived

The Old Curiosity Shop

Set within the heart of London, this novel tells the story of angelic 14-year-old Nell and her grandfather as they struggle to survive and make a living from their antique shop selling odds and ends. It is a story of the effect the evil and greed of the city has upon an infallibly good person. Featuring many famous London locations, the inspiration for the shop itself is rumoured to be 13-14 Portsmouth Street in London, which was renamed in its honour after the book's release.



Oliver Twist may have been inspired by the true account of an orphan working in a cotton mill at the time

Oliver Twist

One of Dickens' most famous works follows the story of an orphaned boy, thrown out of a workhouse and forced to survive on the rough streets of London. The novel not only gives a glimpse into the criminal underworld of the city, but also highlights the cruel treatment of the young poor. There are more than 93 different locations in London referenced in the novel. The areas vary from Saffron Hill, where Fagin resides, to Pentonville, at the time an upper-class area.



Dickens wasn't the first to criticise the law system - plenty of reformers had been lobbying for change for years

Bleak House

Bleak House centres around a long-running legal case that is the result of several conflicting wills. Based on a real court case that lasted 53 years, *Bleak House* is a satirical criticism of the Victorian legal system that served only itself, and not the citizens. It displays the gruesome effect it has upon people, including suicide. It features London locations such as Hatton Garden, at the time a very undesirable neighbourhood; the entrance to the Old Square; and Cooks Court near Chancery Lane.

A tale of one city: Dickensian London



The sewage pouring into the Thames was so horrific in 1858 it caused an event known as The Great Stink

In the London of Dickens' time, life revolved around the old Londontown, the walled city containing St Paul's Cathedral and Cheapside market, described by Dickens in the voice of Pip in *Great Expectations* as "all asmeared with filth and fat and blood... the great black dome of St Paul's bulging at me." Covent Garden as we know it is unrecognisable; Dickens knew it as a bustling vegetable market, "strewn with decayed cabbage-leaves, broken haybands... men are shouting, carts backing, horses neighing, boys fighting, basket-women talking, piemen expatiating on the excellence of their pastry, and donkeys braying."

London was especially famous for its inns and public houses during this period, of which Dickens was no stranger. These gathering places feature in many of his famous works, but *The Pickwick Papers* gives them special focus, as it follows the travels of a club around the country, staying in different inns over their journey. Many of these are dotted around London, such as the George and Vulture on Lombard Street and Golden Cross situated near



This poverty map shows the rich areas of 1889 London in red and the poorest in blue and black

Book of London

Charing Cross. In the novel, Dickens describes the inns as "rambling queer old places... with galleries and passages." The Victorian era was also the first to see purpose-built public houses, and this trend began in London and grew as the population swelled. The popularity of pubs meant that towards the end of the era it was common for them to have flamboyant interiors with etched glass and tiled walls. Dickens used these lively gathering places in many of his works, perhaps most notably The Three Cripples in *Oliver Twist* where Bill Sykes, Nancy and other unsavoury characters would frequent.

Dickens' walks through London during his job, as a legal clerk took him straight through the heart of the thriving legal district near the inner and middle temple, as well as the law courts at the Strand. Lincoln's Inn Fields, the largest public square in London, was also a feature of his walks and his books, described in *Bleak House* as the "perplexed and troublous valley of the shadow of the law." Dickens described the large number of law firms in *The Pickwick Papers*: "Scattered about, in various holes and corners of the Temple,

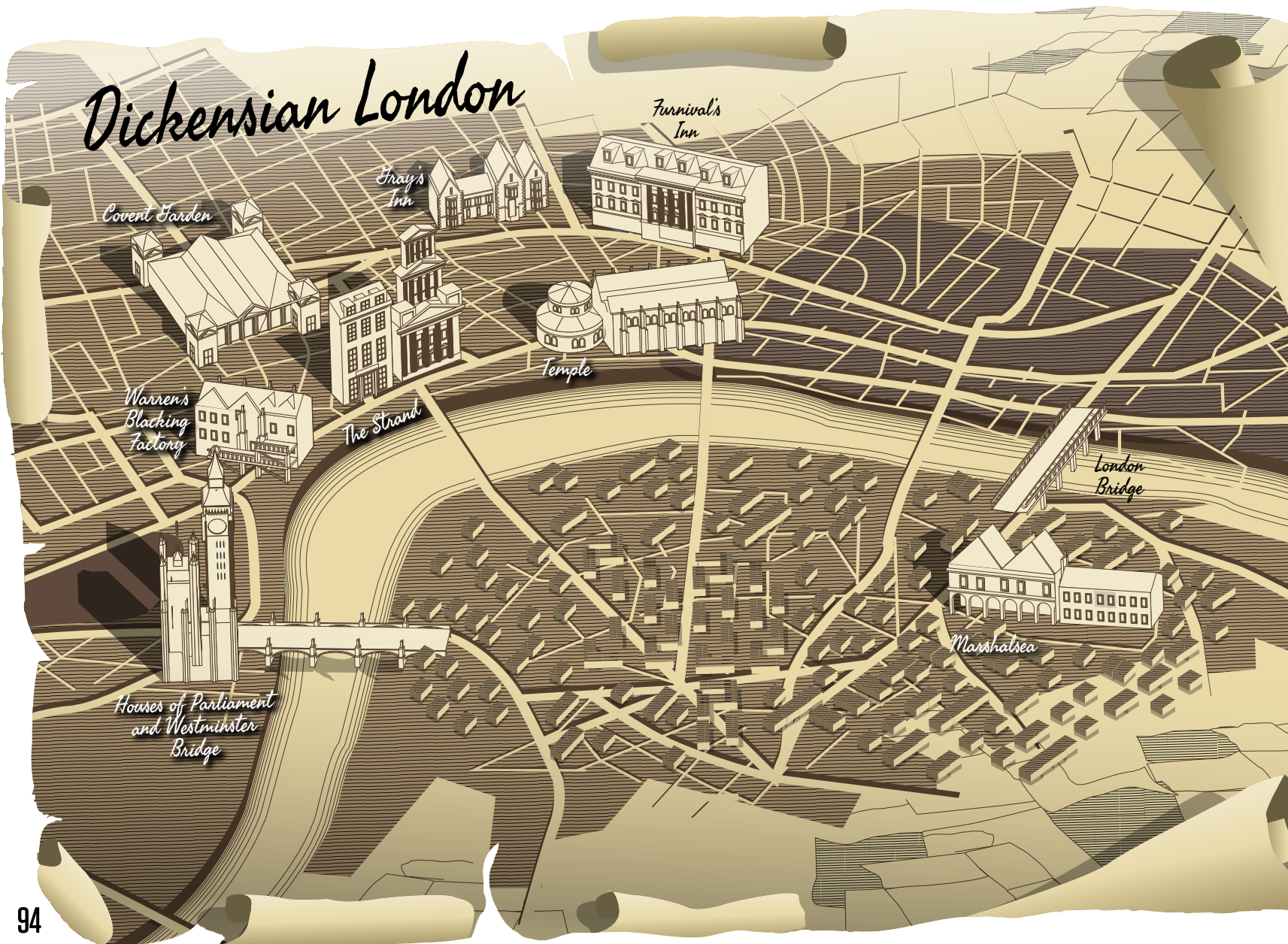
are certain dark and dirty chambers, in and out of which, all the morning in vacation, and half the evening too in term time, there may be seen constantly hurrying with bundles of papers under their arms, and protruding from their pockets, an almost uninterrupted succession of lawyers' clerks."

Dickens made no qualms in revealing his true disdain for certain members of the legal profession he encountered, such as in *Bleak House* where he describes the despicable Tulkinghorn: "Here, in a large house, formerly a house of state, lives Mr Tulkinghorn. It is let off in sets of chambers now, and in these shrunken fragments of its greatness lawyers lie in maggots in nuts." It was not simply the landscape itself that fed into Dickens' novels - the characters the city produced were as connected and influenced by the capital as the buildings themselves. Exaggerated as they might have been, Dickens' characters give a unique insight into the colourful citizens thriving during the London of his era, the many prostitutes he would pass during his late-night walks, the cold, unfeeling businessmen he was forced to serve under, and the crafty members of the growing



The plight of Nell and her grandfather in *The Old Curiosity Shop* caught the attention of the public

"The characters the city produced were... influenced by the capital"



A tale of one city: Dickensian London

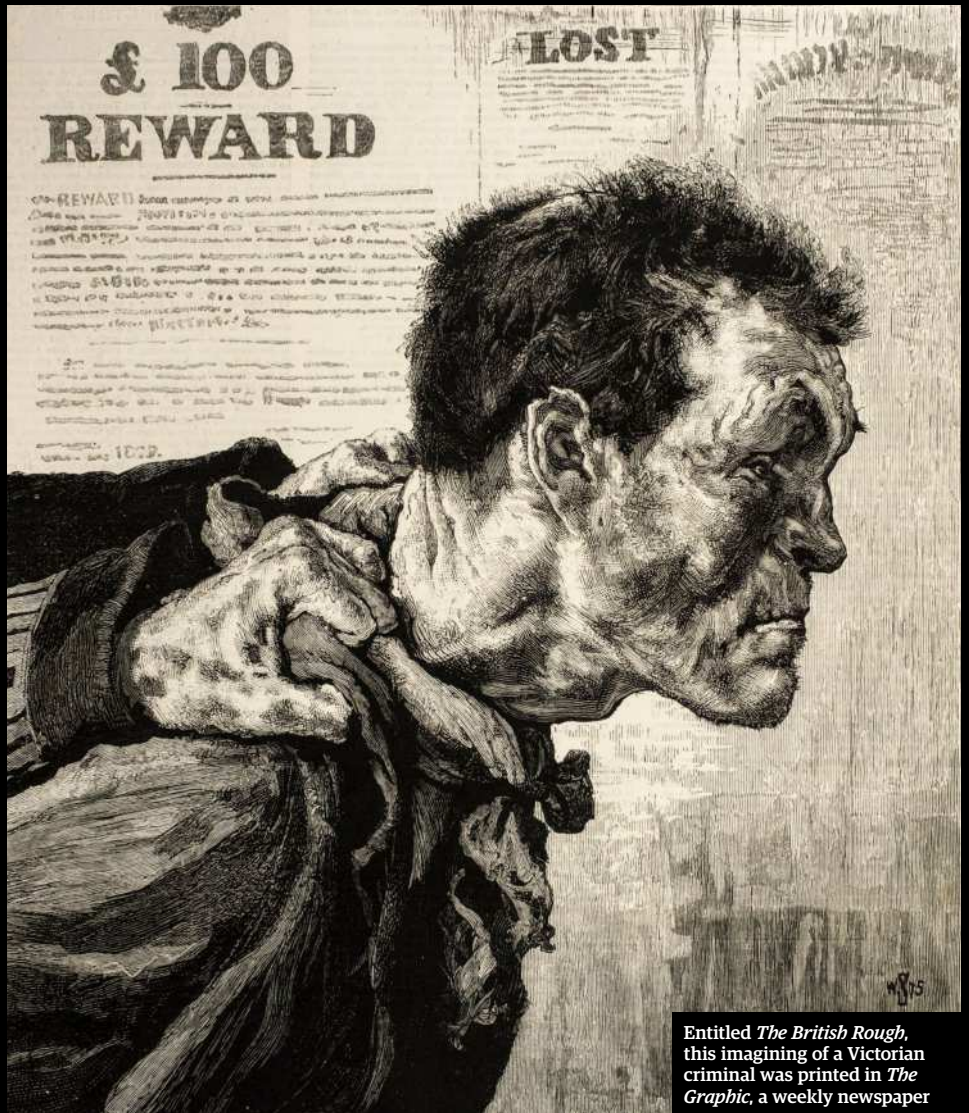
London's criminal underworld

In London's darkest corners, a new criminal underworld was blooming, and Dickens wished to shine a light upon it

As London's population swelled and new neighbourhoods shot up overnight, many wealthy inhabitants began to fear the dingy communities not far from their doorstep. Many of the richest believed a sinister underworld had sprung up in the depths of the city, one that housed unspeakable horrors. This criminal class was said to make their living preying on the respectable people of the city. The East End was dubbed their den of debauchery, and those in the West End did all they could to stay away from it.

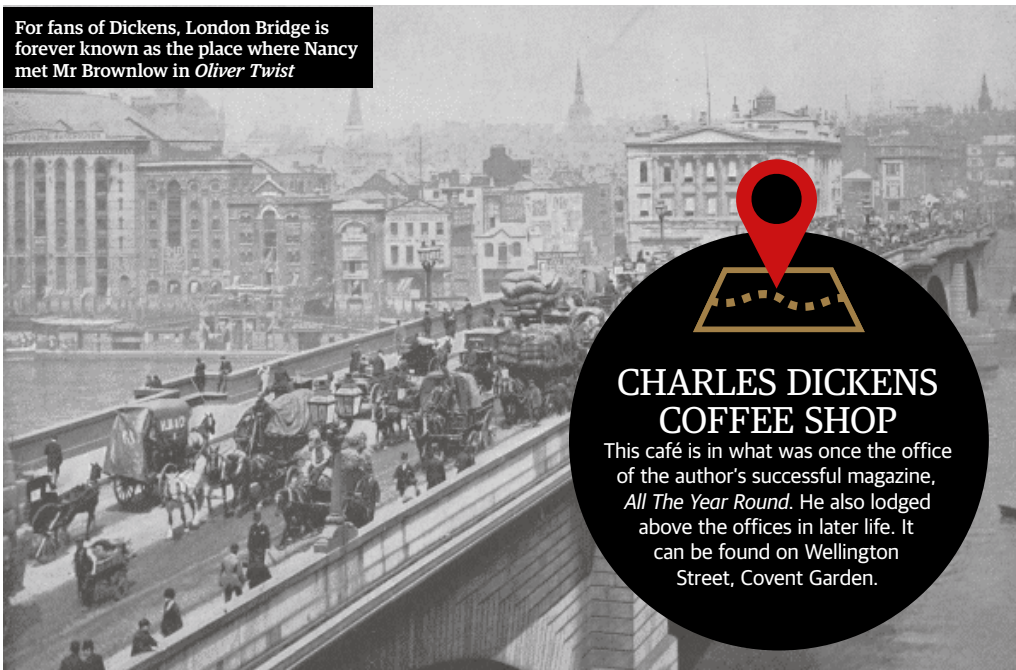
Dickens was aware of these perceptions of the poor held by the upper class, and he embraced them in his novels to strike fear and fascination into his readers. Indeed, many of his characters seem to capitalise on the stereotypes, such as Fagin, an immigrant Jew portrayed as unfeeling, greedy and cruel. A young ten-year-old Dickens was reportedly fascinated and repulsed by the criminal parts of London he glimpsed. However, Dickens also sought to prove, through his novels, just how serious and devastating this criminal underworld could be. Through *Oliver Twist* in particular, he demonstrated how easily it could be for a good, innocent person to have no choice but to be drawn to crime, and that many of these feared 'criminals' were not born that way, but moulded by their wretched conditions, and that of the city itself.

One of Dickens' most tragic figures is that of Nancy, a prostitute. This occupation was regarded with disdain in the Victorian era, but in Dickens' work she is portrayed as a victim, an almost godly figure who wants to escape from the life she has found herself trapped in. Although many of his novels' narratives thrive on sordid, dastardly criminal figures, he also wished to raise awareness among the elite that many of the criminals they feared were not otherworldly or devilish, but normal, good people unable to escape the cycle of poverty the city had trapped them in. As the city grew higher and larger, the gulf between the rich and poor did too, and Dickens wished to do all he could to narrow that gap.



Entitled *The British Rough*, this imagining of a Victorian criminal was printed in *The Graphic*, a weekly newspaper

For fans of Dickens, London Bridge is forever known as the place where Nancy met Mr Brownlow in *Oliver Twist*



CHARLES DICKENS COFFEE SHOP

This café is in what was once the office of the author's successful magazine, *All The Year Round*. He also lodged above the offices in later life. It can be found on Wellington Street, Covent Garden.

criminal underclass. All these characters paint a picture of the thriving diversity of Victorian London, where one wrong turn could take you away from luscious riches to abject squalor.

For Dickens, London was not merely a backdrop for his novels, but a main character with influence over the stories he told. Dickens' waking life was consumed by London, so his novels were naturally about the city itself. He wrote in 1846: "A day in London sets me up and starts me," and laments that outside London he struggled to write: "the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern is immense." The city was his unending fascination and his novels provide us with detailed paintings of the city in the height of its growth, not via an outsider, but through a man who lived and walked through it every day. He loved the city for its opportunities and character, but hated it for its squalor and inequalities. Dickensian London is perhaps best summed up by the man himself: "like a great vapour, with here and there some lights twinkling... fuller of wonders and wickedness than all the cities of the Earth."



The London Underground

Discover how one of the most advanced and complex subterranean rail networks on the planet began and how it has developed over the decades

The London Underground - more commonly known as the Tube - is a sprawling subterranean rail network that comprehensively connects the London metropolitan area. Extending from the reaches of Greater London and beyond into the centre of the bustling metropolis, the Underground is a crucial part of the region's transportation network, carrying over a billion people every year in, out and around Britain's capital.

The Tube consists of a total of 270 rail stations over a network that stretches just over 400 kilometres (250 miles) in length. Of that, 45 per cent consists of underground tunnels, which run beneath the many roads, buildings and rivers above, up to a depth of 58 metres (190 feet) below the surface.

This main network is split into 11 interconnecting lines: the Bakerloo, Central, Circle, Hammersmith & City, District, Jubilee, Metropolitan, Northern, Piccadilly, Victoria and the Waterloo & City.

These lines serve a distinct area of the city and surrounding regions - although they do cross over at high-traffic stops - playing host to a fleet of over 4,000 electric multiple unit (EMU) trains.

Tube trains consist of six to eight electrically powered carriages, each linked in sequence. Individual carriages are referred to as EMUs as no separate locomotive is required to pull them - as typically used on overground rail networks - with electric traction motors installed on the majority of units. Electricity for the traction motors comes courtesy of a relatively uncommon four-rail track system where two standard gauge rails act as the

“Escalators operate for up to 20 hours a day and travel, on average, over 16,093km (10,000mi) per year”

carriages' running rails, while a third carries the positive current at +420 volts DC and an inner fourth rail serves as the negative return at -210 volts DC. Ultimately this provides a total supply voltage of 630 volts DC.

The speed at which the EMU Underground trains travel is generally dictated by the distance between each line's stations, with the closer-together inner city stops only permitting top speeds of 48-64 kilometres (30-40 miles) per hour. On lines that stretch farther out of the city centre, with wider gaps between stations, however, speeds of 80-97 kilometres (50-60 miles) per hour are possible.

The London Underground network is accessed through dedicated stations or others located below overground stations. They are reached by escalators, lifts and stairwells from surface level, with a station's platform then accessible via automated ticket barriers. The depth of both station and platform varies, with some a few metres below street level, and others - such as the inner city Bank station - located 40-plus metres (130 feet) down.

It is the depth of large sections of the London Underground that has meant a series of advanced cooling systems had to be fitted to counteract extreme heat buildup in the summer months.

To give some perspective, during heat waves temperatures have been recorded in excess of 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit)! Solutions include carriage-based air conditioning, station groundwater cooling units and ventilation shafts - all of which help to counter the heat created by the environmental temperature, human bodies and mechanical operations.

Today the Underground is operated by Transport for London (TfL), which oversees almost all aspects of its maintenance, day-to-day running and general improvements. One of TfL's more recent enhancements was the introduction of the Oyster electronic ticketing system in 2003. These credit-card sized contactless devices allow commuters to bypass queues for traditional paper tickets and can also be topped up from your bank account automatically. Proving a huge success, Oyster cards now account for 80 per cent of journeys on London's public transport network.



How are the Tube's tunnels built today?

While historically the Underground's tunnels were constructed through primitive manual labour, today huge 1,000-ton, 150-metre (490-foot)-long tunnel-boring machines (TBMs) do most of the hard graft. Each machine has a rotating cutterhead at the front and a long series of trailers behind that hold all the mechanical and electrical equipment. The cutterhead rotates at approximately three revolutions per minute, carving set diameter tubes out of the clay, sand and gravel situated under much of London.

Interestingly, unlike other tunnel-building projects through more rural terrain, in London all manner of obstacles need to be taken into consideration and bypassed. These include other Underground lines, utility supplies, sewer systems and even hidden subterranean rivers that run down to depths of 40 metres (130 feet) below the surface. For this reason, extensive geophysical maps of the project area are created both before and during an excavation.

Once the Tube tunnel is built, it is lined with concrete and then installed with the electrical cabling and support systems that will power the line's lights and ventilation systems.

Where did it all begin?

Arguably, the London Underground only came into existence due to the tireless efforts of one determined man. Charles Pearson, a solicitor in London, proposed that the city's rapidly increasing congestion above ground could be eased by expanding on the Thames Tunnel and creating a network of subterranean lines.

Despite opposition, Pearson fiercely defended the concept and, after ten years of debate and discussion from 1850 onwards, Parliament finally approved Pearson's plan and authorised the construction of a six-kilometre (3.8-mile)

stretch of underground railway running between Farringdon Street and Bishop's Road (Paddington). Work began in 1860 and used the pre-existing cut-and-cover method of tunnel building where trenches were marked and dug along city streets, lined with brick walls, covered with an arch roof and then topped with a new roadway.

After three years of construction, this relatively short stretch of track was opened to the public on 9 January 1863, becoming the world's very first underground rail passage and the London Underground's first line: the Metropolitan.



Evolution of the Tube

We highlight some of the key developments in the evolution of the London Underground

1863

● Debut

The Metropolitan Railway opens the world's first underground line.

1870

● Below the Thames

Near the Tower of London a tunnel under the Thames is opened. It is the first Tube tunnel to be built using a tunnelling shield.

1890

● A great lift

The first hydraulic lift access to a London Underground station is completed.

1908

● All mapped out

The first combined map of the Tube is published by the Underground Electric Railways Company of London. This map showed eight lines in total.



Underground station tour

Take a look at how London's Tube network gets millions of people to where they want to go

Station

The Underground station's platform is usually separate from the station proper, and the two are typically divided by a series of electronic ticket barriers. Stations feature shops, control rooms, ticket offices and other facilities.

Tunnel

Modern Tube tunnels are dug with giant tunnel-boring machines (TBMs). Once the tunnel is dug it is lined with concrete and cabling to power the lights and ventilation/cooling systems is fitted.

Escape shaft

In case of technical failures or emergencies, all Tube stations are installed with one or more stairwells. These allow passengers to quickly exit the station and grant engineers direct access to the track.

Ticket barrier

Access to platforms is permitted through electronic ticket barriers. These accept paper tickets as well as Oyster cards - a type of RFID-chip smart card.

Escalator

Most Tube platforms are accessed via escalators, which carry passengers up and down large, sloping tunnels. These escalators operate for up to 20 hours a day and travel, on average, over 16,093km (10,000mi) per year.

Walkway

Many Tube stations are linked underground, with warren-like networks of connecting walkways to avoid travelling up to the surface. Longer ones are fitted with travelers.

Train

The Tube has a wide selection of rolling stock. Underground trains have an inverted 'U' design and are made up of several electric multiple units (EMUs). They travel at an average 33kph (20.5mph) and cover about 184,269km (114,500mi) every year.

Track

The Underground uses a relatively uncommon four-rail system for electrification. In this layout, two standard gauge rails act as running rails, a third carries a positive current and the fourth rail serves as the negative return.

EMU door

Carriage doors open automatically thanks to an integrated Correct Side Door Enable (CSDE) system. This detects when the train is alongside a platform and also which side of the EMU needs access.

1925

Electrified

Electrification of the Metropolitan line is extended out of London's city centre.

1938

Stock

The now famous 1938 rolling stock (trains) is introduced by the Underground's chief engineer.

1941

Wartime shelter

During the Blitz in WWII, London civilians take shelter from German air raids in Tube stations and tunnels (right).



1968-69

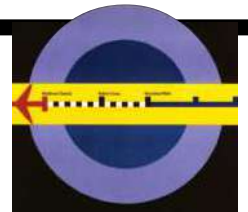
Digital age

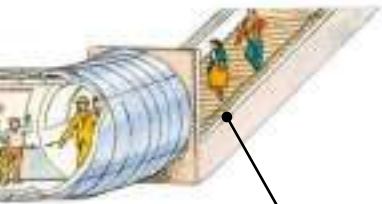
The Victoria line opens between Walthamstow Central and Victoria. It is the world's first computer-controlled railway.

1977

Flying high

The Underground finally links to the city's main airport, Heathrow Central, via the Piccadilly line.





Entrance

The Tube network is accessed from the surface - in the main - by signed stairwells. These either lead directly into the station itself or into road/building underpasses.

Many overground stations have internal entrances to partnering Tube stations.



Platform

Brick and concrete platforms line one or both sides of the track. These are marked with yellow safety lines to prevent accidents. The platforms tend to have some seating, maps and electronic help points.



Art and design on the Underground

For several decades, the London Underground was renowned for advertising its services through the medium of posters, with many famous artists - such as Edward McKnight Kauffer and Paul Nash among many others - being commissioned to produce colourful canvases.

The Tube still advertises in this way, commissioning posters each year in order to promote key improvements to the network and events. In 2013, as part of the Underground's 150-year anniversary, the London Transport Museum displayed 150 of its 3,300 posters, with many of the most famous works plus a few rarer, lesser-known examples.

The future of the Tube

One of the biggest developments in London's transport system has been the introduction of the Crossrail line. While not technically part of the Tube, Crossrail is integrated with it, adding a 21-kilometre (13-mile) line across the city. After many delays, the central section of the new Elizabeth line opened to passengers in May 2022.

The London Underground itself, however, is currently undergoing a major

renovation project of its own, increasing the size and access points to stations, adding extra rolling stock to each line, extending many pre-existing lines and even introducing Wi-Fi zones. Indeed, over 100 stations throughout the Underground network are already installed with Wi-Fi hotspots, allowing those travelling on the Tube to access the internet even when deep underground.



Tottenham Court Road was just one of many stations overhauled as part of the Crossrail project

London Underground by numbers

1.107bn

people use the London Underground each year

82 million

passengers enter Waterloo Tube station annually

19,000

people work on the Tube

60m

Length of the network's longest escalator, which is found at Angel station

4,134

EMUs in the entire fleet

27.8km

Longest continuous tunnel length

270

stations served by the LU

55.2m

Deepest lift shaft

426

escalators installed

1980

LTM opens

After the Covent Garden Market moves in 1971, the London Transport Museum (right) opens in its place nine years later. It's still a very popular attraction today.



1987

King's Cross ablaze

A major fire on one of the wooden escalators at King's Cross Underground station kills 31 people.

2003

Oyster

Oyster payment cards are introduced, allowing speedy access and automatic top-ups.



2013

The big 150

The London Underground celebrates its 150th anniversary.



Royal Observatory, Greenwich

The Royal Observatory played a key role in
mapping the seas and stars

The Royal Observatory was commissioned to be built in 1675 by King Charles II, who wanted better navigation systems for his naval traders and explorers. By mapping the stars accurately, sailors could find their longitude when at sea; this was important as many new trade routes were opening up between Britain and other countries around Europe and beyond.

Designed by architect Christopher Wren, who was also an astronomer, the Royal Observatory was completed in 1676, becoming Britain's first state-funded scientific research institution. The

primary building was named Flamsteed House after the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed. The position of Astronomer Royal was created by King Charles II when he commissioned the construction of the Royal Observatory. Charles instructed Flamsteed to "apply himself with the most exact care and diligence to the rectifying of the tables of the motions of the heavens, and the places of the fixed stars, so as to find out the so much desired longitude of places, for the perfecting of the art of navigation." Flamsteed would live on the ground floor while conducting



his work in the Octagon Room on the floor above. Each successor would live and work in that building with their families until they died, except for the rare occasion when they would be forced to retire. Over the almost 300 years that the Royal Observatory was working, only ten Astronomers Royal were posted there.

“The path of the world’s most famous comet, Halley’s Comet, was calculated from the Royal Observatory”

The Observatory was chosen to be built in Greenwich Park, as the hilltop location offered a great view of the skies since it was a rural part of London, but it was still close to the city.

As new Astronomers Royal moved in to the Observatory, they would look to make their mark on the world of astronomy. The path of the world’s most famous comet, Halley’s Comet, was calculated from the Royal Observatory by the second Astronomer Royal, Edmond Halley, in 1682. Halley wouldn’t live to see the comet return in 1758 due to it only appearing every 74 to 79 years, however, it would later be named after him.

As new technology was developed, new equipment was created for the Royal Observatory,

and the building was expanded to accommodate it. In the early part of the 19th century, the Observatory’s work focused more on time signals, which can be seen with the red time ball on the top of Flamsteed House. Installed in 1833 and viewable from the River Thames, the time ball was raised at 12.55pm GMT and dropped at 1pm so captains could set their chronometers accurately before sailing off. The time ball is still raised and dropped to this day. A system of electric clocks was introduced in 1852. There was the Shepherd Master Clock that would send signals to slave dials at various railway stations and also to the large clock that sits outside the building. This clock, now known as the Shepherd Gate Clock, is notable for being the first to show Greenwich Mean Time to the public.

As more power stations were installed along the River Thames, and more homes were burning coal to stay warm, air and light pollution became

an issue. What was once a rural part of London became covered in smog that contained sulphur dioxide, which damaged the mirrors used in the Observatory’s equipment. The train lines in the area also started to become electrified, disturbing the magnetic equipment. This meant that the Royal Observatory would have to be moved to a more rural area. In the 1940s and 1950s, much of the equipment was moved to Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex, and the name was changed to Royal Greenwich Observatory, while the original building was renamed the Old Royal Observatory. In 1990 it would be moved again to Cambridge, before closing in 1998 and being made part of the National Maritime Museum.



The Great Equatorial Telescope

One of the largest of its kind, the refracting telescope kept the Royal Observatory, Greenwich ahead of others

In the late 19th century, the Royal Observatory felt it was falling behind other observatories around the world in terms of technology. So, in 1885, the Astronomer Royal at the time, William Christie, made the decision to replace the 12.8 Merz refractor, and commissioned a larger telescope to ensure the Royal Observatory remained a leading facility in the world of astronomy. Put into use in 1893, the 28-inch Great Equatorial Telescope is the largest of its kind in the UK, and seventh largest in the world. Sir Howard Grubb in Dublin built the telescope; at the time he was considered the best optical designer in the world. The telescope was to be housed in the Great Equatorial Dome, a drum-shaped building that housed the 12.8-inch Merz refractor telescope. When installing the new telescope on the mount from the Merz, they found the Great Equatorial Telescope was too long. This led them to change the dome to the onion shape we see today.

The telescope was housed at the Royal Observatory until war was declared in 1939. This turned out to be a smart decision, as the onion dome was damaged by a German bomb in October 1940. The dome that stands today is a replica of the original. The lenses were stored elsewhere before the whole thing was transported to Herstmonceux where it stayed until 1971. When the Observatory in Herstmonceux decided the telescope was redundant, they offered it to the National Maritime Museum, who owned the Greenwich Observatory where it lives today and is still used for public observations.

The prime meridian

The line dividing east from west passes through the Observatory as well as nine other countries

The Royal Observatory is home to the prime meridian, a line of longitude circling the world that is defined at 0° - where east meets west, similar to how the equator splits north and south. This is the point that was used to determine Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). At one time, each nation had its own prime meridian that passed through the country. However, as more trade routes were opened and ships started travelling around the world, they adopted other countries’ meridians. The Greenwich meridian was established in 1851, but it was declared to be the prime meridian at a conference held in Washington at the request of US president Chester A Arthur in 1884. A group of 41 delegates from over 20 countries chose Greenwich meridian to be the prime meridian of the world, as two thirds of ships were already using this line as reference. Today, the prime meridian is marked along the courtyard of the Royal Observatory with a steel strip, and a green laser is projected north from the Observatory, marking the prime meridian through London’s sky.



VICTORIAN CRIME

While overseas the British Empire was flourishing, in London, the city of fog, a grisly war was waged between the emerging criminal class and a fledgling police force

As Queen Victoria ascended to power, England's influence over the world spread like a blot of spilt ink, and this dark mark seeped into the houses and alleyways of the country's overpopulated cities. Executions of dastardly criminals drew increasing crowds and headlines warned of the crime wave washing over the country. Thieves lingered in shaded alleys, there were violent acts of garroting against the rich and influential, and a well-dressed man who killed for fun was known only by his eerie nickname, Jack the Ripper.

The industrial revolution with its smoke-spewing factories created a buzz of excitement in the cities, but life was not so full of opportunities for the lower-class workers. As more families flooded into the cramped cities, poverty thrived. It was soon followed by its frequent bedfellow, crime.

Rookeries sprung up around London - nests of winding alleys, dead ends and shadowed corners where thieves, prostitutes and cheats could scheme and fester. They were a den of gloomy places for criminals to hide, and a twisted maze in which to lose the police. One of the central breeding grounds for this new and dangerous class was the neighbourhood of Whitechapel, along with the surrounding areas of Bethnal Green,

Wapping and Mile End, not to forget the ever-growing slums of Spitalfields. These run-down and over-populated places became cut off from the rest of the city, and crime flourished.

Children born in these dens of decay had little hope of leading an honest life, else face the cruel and dangerous conditions of the workhouse. Better to take a chance on the short and fast life of a criminal than the inevitable poverty that hung all around them like the thick black smoke that covered the city. Until 1870 there was no compulsory education, so orphaned, abandoned or poverty-stricken youngsters gained a very different set of skills on the streets.

As they grew up, the street urchins outgrew the silken handkerchiefs and measly rewards at the mercy of their masters. The common path for the older pickpocket was to join the swell mob. These older, experienced crooks were debonair criminals who earned the trust of their victims before bleeding them dry.

On paper, it seemed Victorian London was the safest period in the city's history, but in reality a lack of faith in the police left many crimes unreported, and all peace-loving citizens knew to keep their wits about them, else leave certain areas significantly lighter than they entered them.



ABOVE:
During Queen
Victoria's reign
London's crime
rate soared





**CITY OF LONDON
POLICE MUSEUM**

Located in the Guildhall Library, the City of London Police Museum is free to visit, and displays items belonging to criminals and the force dating back to pre-police days.

CRIMINAL SLANG

A guide to the popular slang terms of Victorian London

AREA-SNEAK: Opportunistic burglar

BEARER UP: Someone who uses a female accomplice to distract men while they rob them

BLUE BOTTLE: Policemen

BONNETING: Tipping a man's hat over his head to make him easier to mug

BROADSMAN: A cardsharp

BUG-HUNTERS: People who rob drunks, usually at night

BUTTONER: A sharper's assistant, usually entices the targets

CRACKSMAN: A burglar or safecracker, a thief who breaks locks

DRAGSMAN: A thief who targets occupants of carriages

FLASH HOUSE: A public house that serves as the hangout of criminals

GONOPHS: Child thieves

HOISTERS: Shoplifters

KIDSMAN: Someone in charge of a troupe of child thieves

MAGSMAN: Confidence tricksters, usually inferior

MALTOOLER: A pickpocket who steals from those riding the omnibus

PRIG: A thief

RAMPSPMEN: A hoodlum

ROOKERY: A slum

SHARPER: A swindler, usually involved in rigged card games

SMASHERS/SHOFULMEN: Counterfeiters

SMATTER Hauling; stealing handkerchiefs from men

SPEELERS: Gamblers

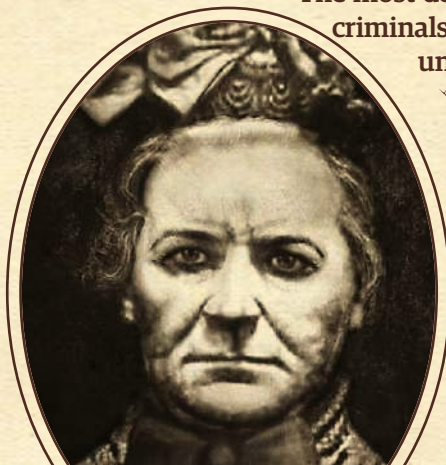
SWELL MOB: Elite pickpockets, usually well dressed and appearing respectable

THE FAMILY: The criminal underworld

THIMBLE-RIGGER: A con man who dupes people with the shell game - where an item is hidden under one of three cups

VICTORIA'S MOST WANTED

The most deadly and dastardly criminals of the Victorian underworld



AMELIA DYER

1837-96

NICKNAMES Ogress of Reading, The Reading Baby Farmer
CRIME After training as a nurse for many years, Dyer opened her home to young pregnant women who had conceived out of wedlock. When the babies were born she promised the mothers she would provide a safe and loving home for a one-off payment. However, instead of providing homes, Dyer killed the children and pocketed the profits. Although she aroused suspicion, she was able to avoid detection thanks to various conveniently timed stays in mental hospitals. When her crimes were finally discovered, Dyer had been responsible for 200-400+ child deaths.

PUNISHMENT Hung from the neck until dead
LAST WORDS "I have nothing to say."

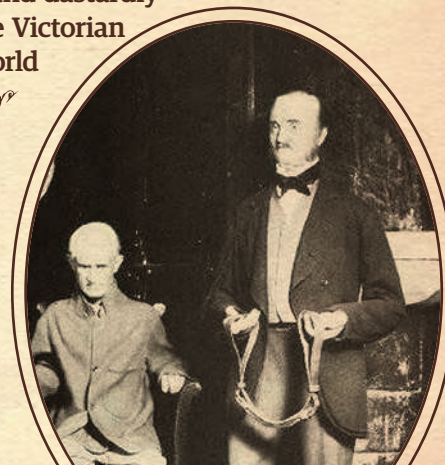


MARIA MANNING

1821-49

NICKNAME Bermondsey Horror
CRIME Maria Manning was a Swiss domestic servant fascinated with the trappings of wealth, so decided she would marry a rich man to become a lady. She set her sights on Patrick O'Connor. However, she ended up marrying Frederick Manning, a poor railway guard who promised he was set to inherit a fortune. This was a lie, so Maria continued her affair with O'Connor, which Manning encouraged. The couple invited him over for dinner one evening after digging a grave under the kitchen floor. When he arrived, she shot him, but the wound was not fatal, so Manning battered him to death with a chisel.

PUNISHMENT Hung from the neck until dead
LAST WORDS None reported



CHARLES PEACE

1832-79

NICKNAME The Banner Cross Killer

CRIME Beginning with small robberies, Peace was in and out of jail throughout his life. In 1876, he killed a police officer while robbing a house, but instead William Habron was found guilty. Peace later became obsessed with a woman called Katherine Dyson. One night her husband caught him stalking her and Peace shot him dead. Peace was eventually arrested, despite attempting to escape by throwing himself from a train window.

PUNISHMENT Hung from the neck until dead
LAST WORDS "Sir, if I believed what you and the church say that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it [...] and think it worth while living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!"



WILLIAM PALMER

1824-56

NICKNAMES The Rugeley Poisoner, The Prince of Poisoners

CRIME Palmer was involved in crime from an early age, facing allegations of stealing. He later became a doctor, but death seemed to follow Palmer - within weeks of his marriage to Anne Thornton, her wealthy mother was dead, and even four of his own children died mysteriously. In debt, Palmer took out life insurance on his wife and brother and they both died soon after. The murder of John Cook finally exposed Palmer. Cook was poisoned by Palmer, who then interfered with the post mortem. Despite this, poisoning by strychnine was ruled as the cause of death and Palmer found guilty. It is believed he killed 14 people.

PUNISHMENT Hung from the neck until dead
LAST WORDS "Cook did not die from strychnine."

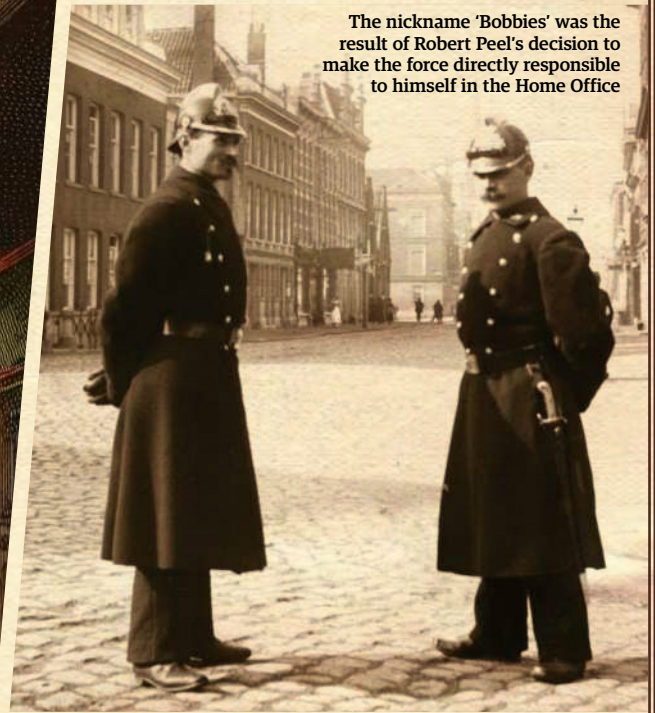
Victorian crime

The Metropolitan Police Force was established after a sharp rise in crime in Victorian London

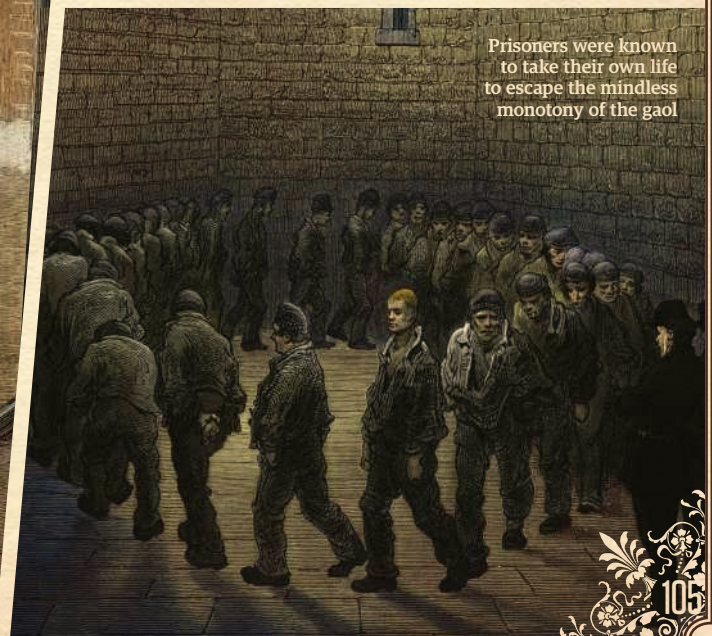


Mudlarks scavenged in river mud for lost treasures

The nickname 'Bobbies' was the result of Robert Peel's decision to make the force directly responsible to himself in the Home Office



Prisoners were known to take their own life to escape the mindless monotony of the gaol



Many houses in Victorian London contained multiple families in different rooms

WHO WAS JACK THE RIPPER?

Unsolved murders in 19th-century London were not uncommon. The vast majority of victims were prostitutes, and the bodies of these fallen women were found so often that it's impossible to estimate just how many were murdered. But there was one set of prostitute murders so sinister and horrifying that the mystery surrounding the killer's identity fascinates people to this day.

When the corpse of Mary Ann Nichols was discovered on 31 August 1888, it was butchered so horrifically that it was deemed the work "of a madman." It was treated as yet another prostitute murder until a week later a similarly butchered corpse was found. The police soon realised they weren't dealing with a random act of violence, but a serial killer. As the horrors of

the murders filled the headlines, the police received a mysterious letter signed by 'Jack the Ripper', and the dark legend was born.

As the murders continued, suspect after suspect was arrested and then released. The Whitechapel murders dominated the newspapers and the police seemed constantly one step behind 'saucy Jacky'. First butchers were accused, then Jews were in the spotlight, next anyone with even the faintest link to a victim became a suspect.

Then suddenly, and without warning, Jack vanished into the shadows. For the next 100 years people have continued to attempt to determine his true identity, but the answer to this mystery seems to have been lost in the dark and winding Victorian slums where he claimed his victims.



Victorian crime



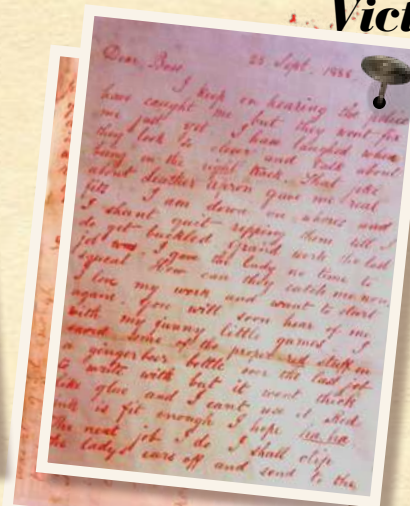
Prince Albert Victor
1864-92

PROFESSION: Prince
PROPOSED MOTIVE: Driven mad by syphilis, killed to hide illegitimate child



Elizabeth Stride

BODY DISCOVERED: 1am, 30 September 1888
LOCATION: Dufield's Yard, Berner Street
WOUNDS: Cut throat



Annie Chapman

BODY DISCOVERED: 6am, 8 September 1888
LOCATION: 29 Hanbury Street
WOUNDS: Cut throat, abdomen ripped open, uterus removed



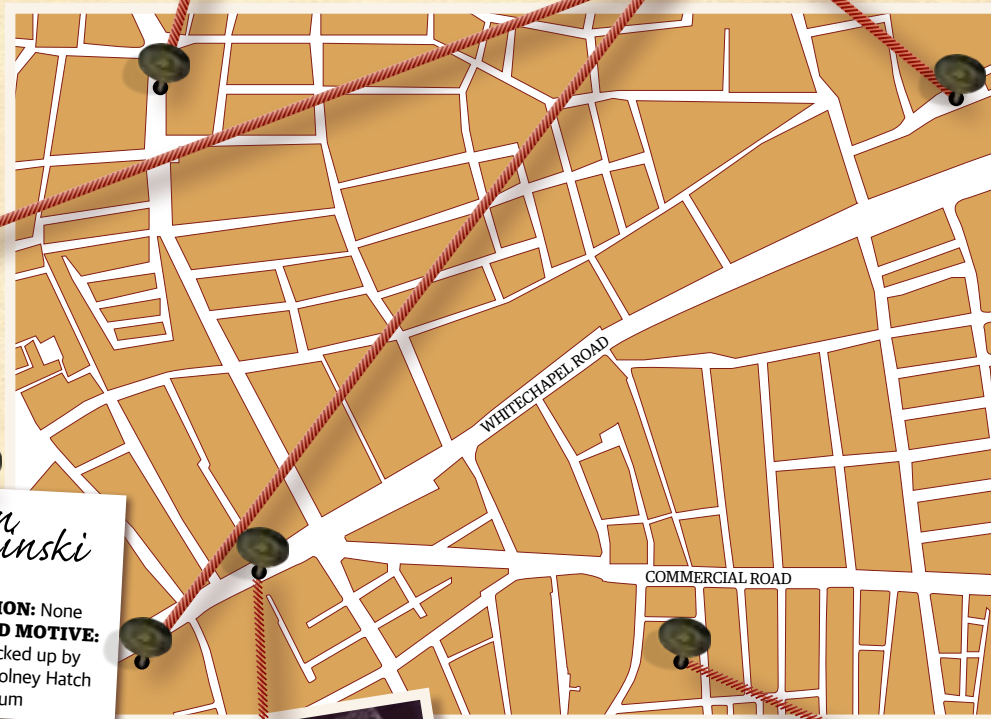
Mary Jane Kelly

BODY DISCOVERED: 10.45am, 9 November 1888
LOCATION: 13 Miller's Court, Spitalfields
WOUNDS: Cut throat, abdomen emptied of most organs, heart missing, face mutilated



Joseph Barnett 1858-1927

PROFESSION: Fish porter
PROPOSED MOTIVE: Obsessively in love with the prostitute Mary Kelly and killed others to scare her off the streets



Aaron Kosminski
1865-1919

PROFESSION: None
PROPOSED MOTIVE: Insanity, backed up by his stay in Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum

Dr Thomas Neill Cream
1850-92

PROFESSION: Abortion doctor
PROPOSED MOTIVE: General sadistic tendencies, his supposed last words were "I am Jack the..."



Catherine Eddowes

BODY DISCOVERED: 1.45am, 30 September 1888
LOCATION: Mitre Square
WOUNDS: Cut throat, abdomen ripped open, left kidney and most of uterus removed, face mutilated



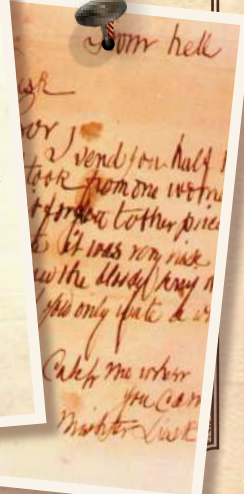
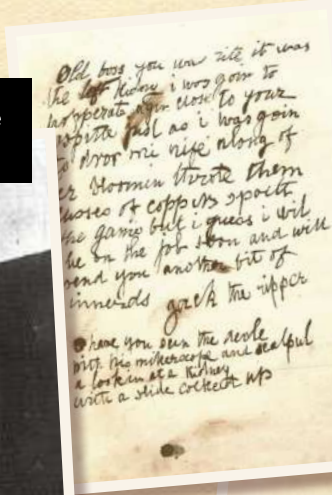
James Kelly 1860-1929

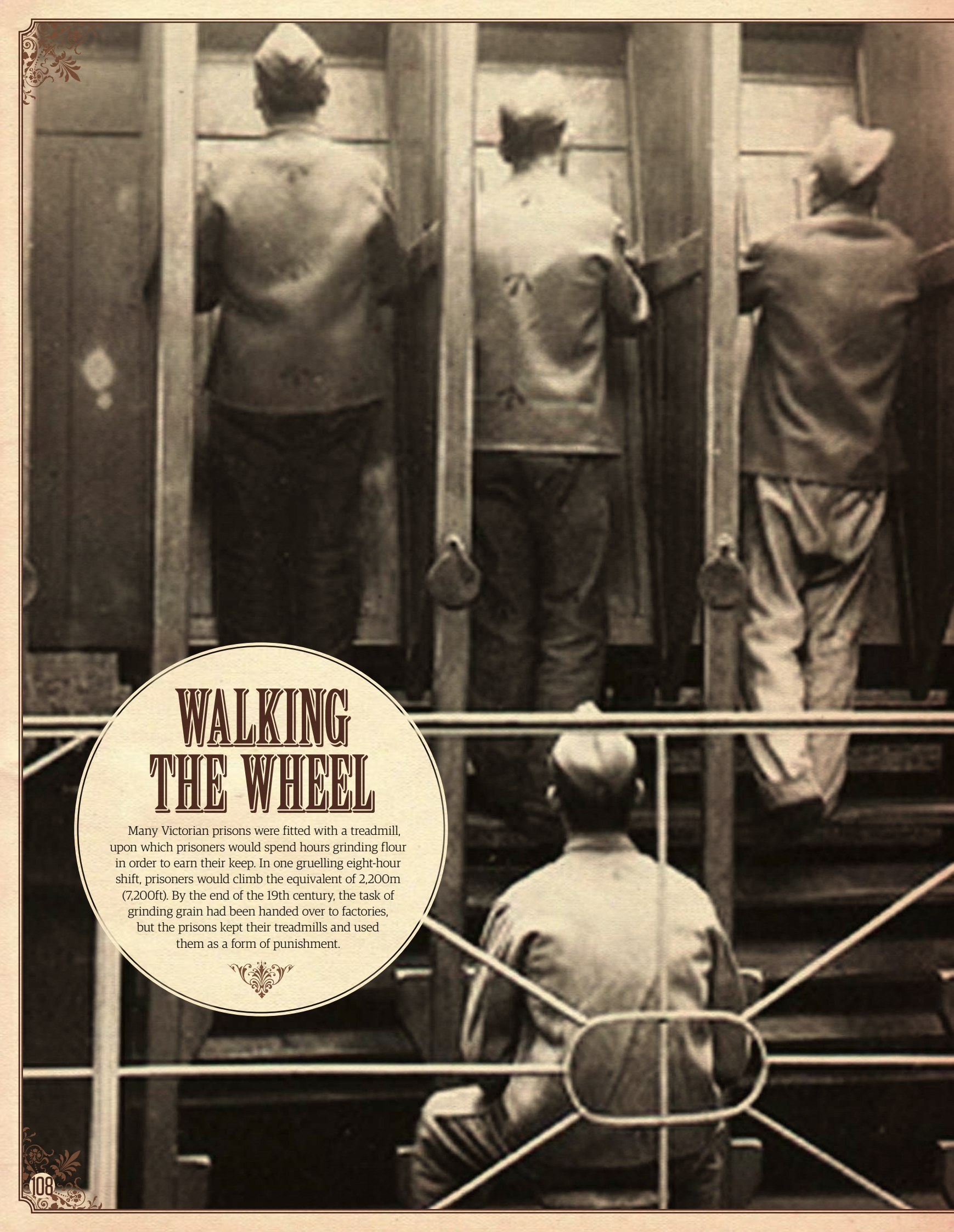
PROFESSION: Furniture upholsterer
PROPOSED MOTIVE: Already murdered his wife, showed a strong dislike for prostitutes, insanity

Mary Ann Nichols

BODY DISCOVERED: 3.40am, 31 August 1888
LOCATION: Buck's Row, Whitechapel
WOUNDS: Cut throat, abdomen ripped open, many other incisions

Miller's Court, where Mary Jane Kelly's body was found butchered



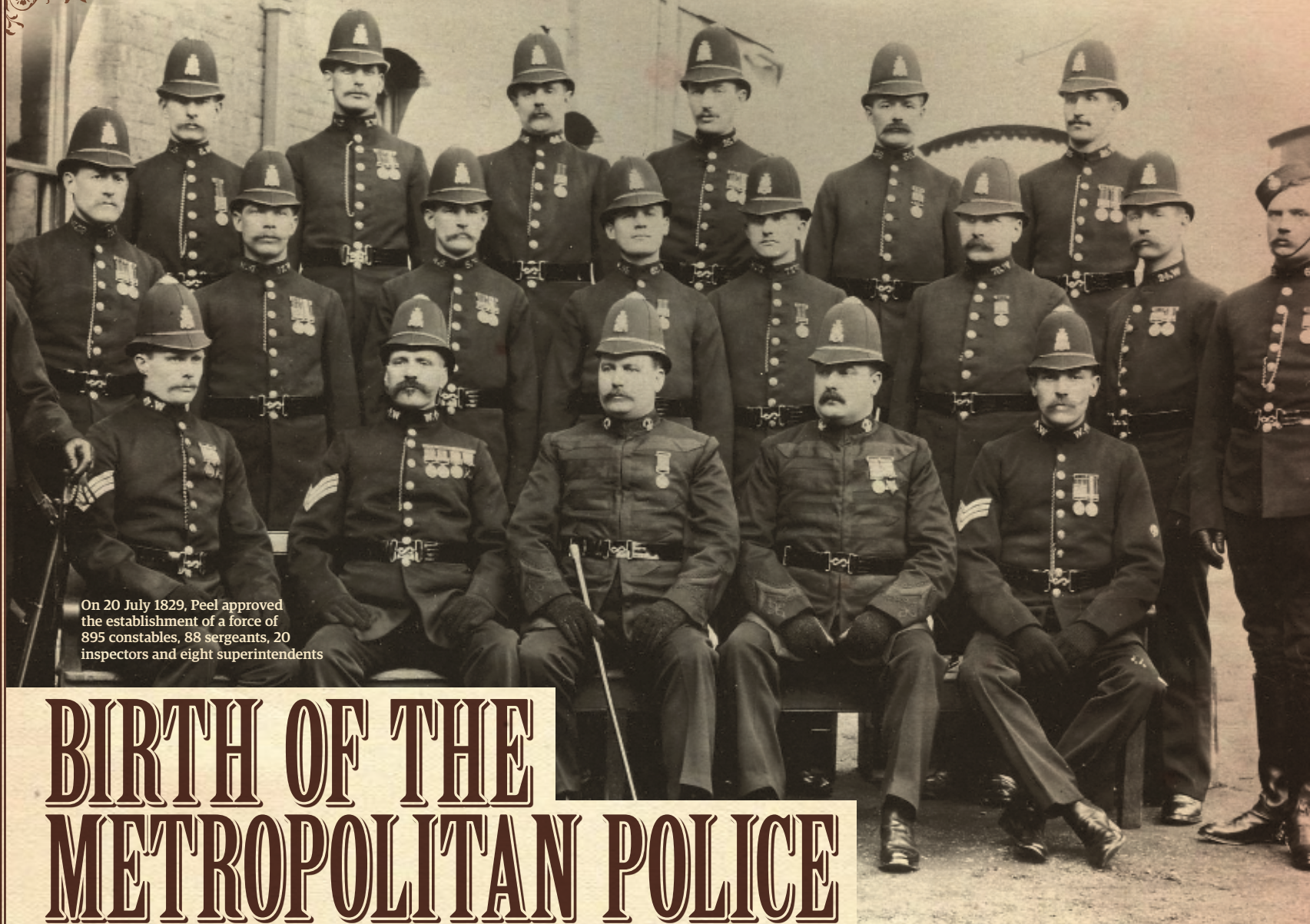


WALKING THE WHEEL

Many Victorian prisons were fitted with a treadmill, upon which prisoners would spend hours grinding flour in order to earn their keep. In one gruelling eight-hour shift, prisoners would climb the equivalent of 2,200m (7,200ft). By the end of the 19th century, the task of grinding grain had been handed over to factories, but the prisons kept their treadmills and used them as a form of punishment.







On 20 July 1829, Peel approved the establishment of a force of 895 constables, 88 sergeants, 20 inspectors and eight superintendents

BIRTH OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE

As crime became organised and social disorder grew, it put an immense strain on the dated Tudor system of policing. Prior to the Metropolitan Police Act introduced by home secretary Robert Peel in 1829, small parishes and market towns only had a constable and the local watch and ward to maintain order. Meanwhile, in London, the bow street runners, part publicly funded detectives, became the first incarnation of what is known today as a professional police force. When Peel's Metropolitan Police Force took to the streets of London in 1829, it was to a city very much in need of law and order.

1,000 new policemen were hired to supplement the existing 400. They were given weekly pay and distinctive bottle-blue uniforms; policing became a full-time profession with one central goal - the detection and prevention of crime. The force was specially designed to represent a neutral good - they were distanced from the military and were armed only with a truncheon and rattle (though some did later carry flintlock pistols). Despite Peel's best efforts, the police were initially not well liked. Many citizens saw them as a threat to civil liberties and they earned unfavourable nicknames such as 'blue devils' and 'Peel's bloody gang'.

Despite their focus being to prevent disorder, many policemen were attacked, impaled, blinded and even killed. Even with the thorough selection process wannabe officers underwent, many of them were arrested for being drunk on duty, while others were found guilty of corruption. The very first policeman, given the number one, was sacked after just four hours on the job for drunkenness.

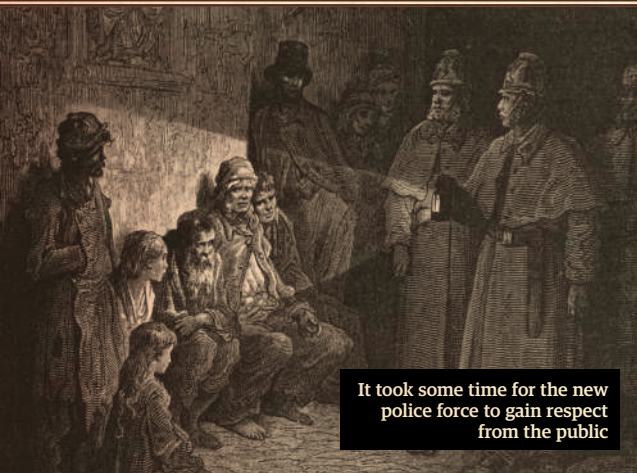
Despite the negative public reaction, the preventative measures used by the police were successful and crime did appear to decline. It is certain that the presence of police dissuaded criminals, but often this merely pushed them into the areas of London where the police did not operate. Wandsworth attracted so many criminals eager to escape the law that it became known as 'Black Wandsworth'. Many boroughs in England and Wales as a whole were hesitant to set up their own forces, and by 1848, 22 boroughs still had no official police force. Although implementation was slow, eventually police forces spread across the country, and in 1856, 73,240 people were arrested in London alone.

For those found guilty, a combination of backbreaking work and mind-numbing monotony awaited in the gaols. The Victorian era was a time of dramatic change in the prison system and new techniques were being employed across the country. Hulks - old sailing ships originally used to hold prisoners to be transported - were increasingly used to house ordinary prisoners. Conditions on the hulks were horrific and cholera was rife as filthy polluted water from the Thames was used for washing and drinking. Techniques of isolation and segregation were employed to encourage reflection. At Pentonville Prison (dubbed a 'convict academy'), prisoners were stripped of their names and referred to by their cell numbers on a brass badge pinned to their chest. They wore a brown cloth cap with a mask that covered their faces - their voices and stories hidden from the world.

Hard labour was first employed as a way to encourage productivity from prisoners, with the treadmill, a large cylinder with steps that the prisoners monotonously climbed for up to eight hours a day, producing



It was not uncommon for officers' rattles to be used against them



It took some time for the new police force to gain respect from the public



For many, the dangers of a life of crime were preferable to being sent to the workhouse

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

ARSON 15 years' transportation

ABANDONING FAMILY 21 days' hard labour

STEALING ONIONS Seven years' penal servitude

BEGGING 21 days' hard labour

MURDER Hanged from the neck until dead

ASSAULT 21 days' imprisonment

TRESPASSING One month's hard labour/ fined 27 shillings

STEALING A WAISTCOAT 6 months' hard labour

flour for the prison to sell. However, in the later part of the 19th century, there was no end product for this back-breaking task and it, along with a host of other mindless exercises, was designed only to degrade and break the prisoners' spirits. The gaols wished to establish themselves as a spectre of pain and suffering to deter criminals. Because the poor outside were suffering under terrible conditions, the government were keen that the prisons represented a bleaker outlook than the workhouse.

But the cold, bare cells of the gaols were preferable to the grim image of the hangman's noose. Public hangings attracted large crowds up to the day they were outlawed. In one particularly grisly case, the condemned William Bousfield avoided execution by mounting his feet on the sides of the drop. After four more unsuccessful attempts, the hangman leapt into the pit beneath the scaffold and hung on to the prisoner's legs.

Gradually, as the century came to a close, more liberal ideas of reform began to play a part in penal policy, with doctors and psychiatrists interacting closely with prisoners. However, it would take some time for the authorities to regard criminals as more than simply an incurable social evil.

ANATOMY OF A VICTORIAN POLICEMAN

Truncheon

Early truncheons were heavily decorated and seen as proof of identification for the officers. They also featured the monarch's crown and name of the police force. Truncheons were not replaced by identifying warrant cards until the 1890s.

Handcuffs

All policemen were equipped with two pairs of 'D' cuffs, named for the shape that resembled the letter. These handcuffs came in two sizes - one designed for arresting adults, and the other in a child-friendly size for young lawbreakers.

Bull's-eye lantern

Due to the lack of streetlights on Victorian streets, officers would carry a lantern to patrol the city at night. The lantern was ignited by lighting a wick resting in an oil-filled container.

Rattle

Before they were replaced with whistles, all policemen carried rattles made from wood. They would use this to alert other officers for assistance. Unfortunately, many criminals used the rattles as weapons against the officers themselves.

Uniform

Blue was carefully chosen as the colour of police uniforms to deliberately separate the officers from the red-uniformed military enforcers. Male officers would also all wear cork helmets faced with fabric, but while on patrol in a vehicle they would wear flat, peaked caps.





1. 1715 Doggett's Coat and Badge

Every year, six apprentice watermen row against one another along the Thames in a competition first commissioned by George I. The winner takes home a traditional watermen's coat adorned with a silver badge, just as their predecessors have for three centuries.



2. 1753 The British Museum

Wander through Bloomsbury to the British Museum and enjoy one of the largest collections of historical artefacts anywhere in the world. Originating from the collection of 18th-century naturalist Hans Sloane, the collection now contains more than eight-million items.



3. 1819 Piccadilly Circus

The electronic billboards of Piccadilly Circus are one of London's most recognisable sights. Initially established to link Regent Street and Piccadilly, it's a place that never sleeps. Be sure not to miss the classical statue and fountain, as well as a host of shops and theatres.



4. 1824 The National Gallery

Holbein, da Vinci, van Gogh and more meet in the vast halls of the National Gallery. With a collection spanning almost a thousand years, this is a chance to stroll through the history of international art, and see some truly legendary works up close.

London 1700 to 1940

1836 Madame Tussaud's

From the Chamber of Horrors to Lady Gaga, Madame Tussaud's offers celeb spotters a cast of waxwork superstars.

6

1857 Science Museum

With a foundation stone laid by Queen Victoria, this museum takes visitors into history and all the way to the future.

1871 The Royal Albert Hall

Whether you're enjoying a concert or attending the Proms, you'll be as awestruck by your surroundings as the show.

1852 The Victoria and Albert Museum

The V&A Museum is dedicated to preserving art and antiquity; its vast rooms will take your breath away.

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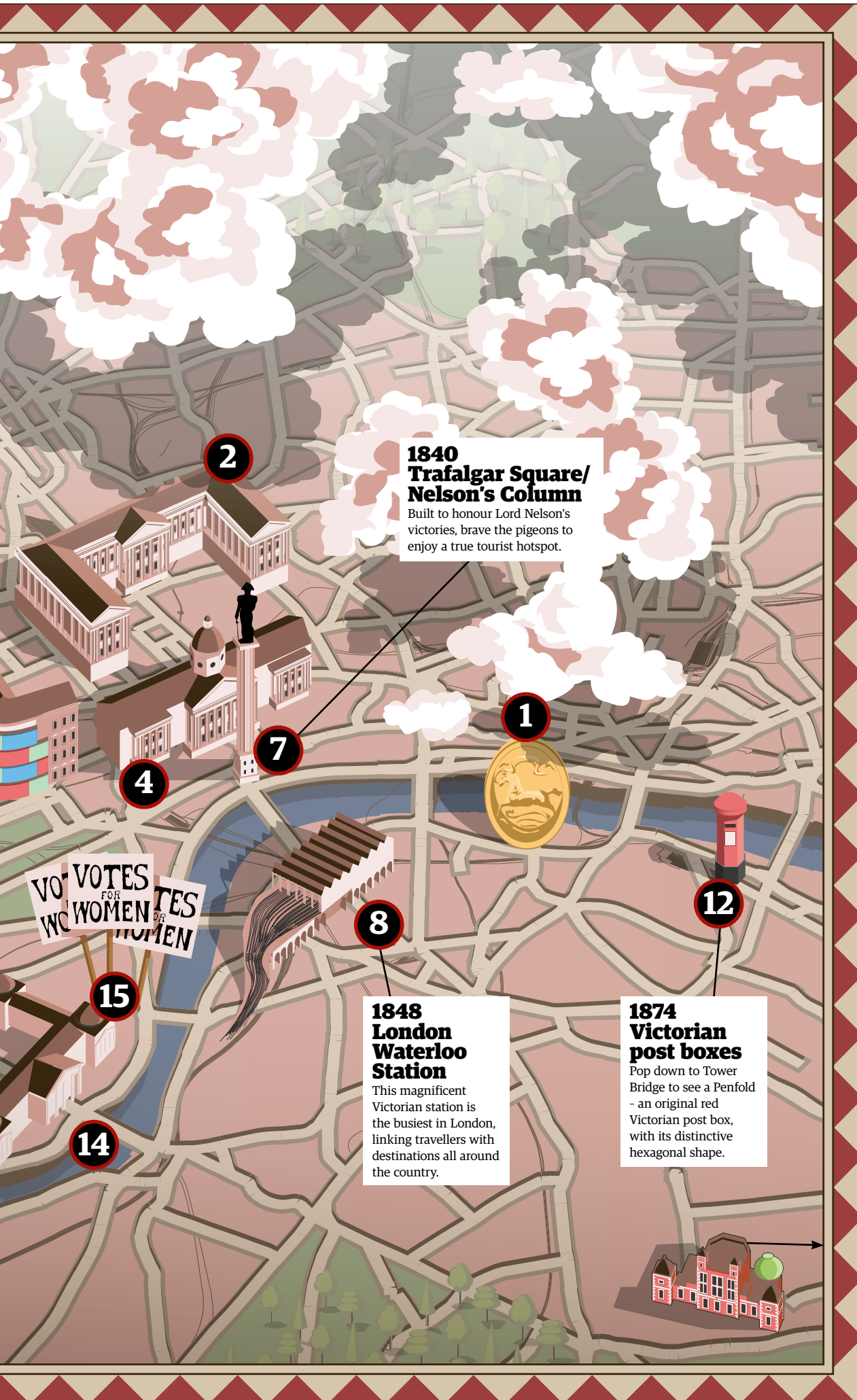
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16

1834 Harrods

This glittering department store is still one of the city's most popular temples to retail therapy.



13. 1881 The Natural History Museum

From dinosaurs to Darwin, the Natural History Museum tells the story of the natural world. With original specimens and interactive exhibits, not to mention the immense blue whale skeleton that was unveiled in 2017, it really is suitable for all ages.



14. 1897 Tate Britain

When the Tate opened in 1897, it was a small collection dedicated to British work. Now the Tate Britain houses an extensive collection of important British art, both old and new, including many works by Joseph Mallord William Turner.



15. 1907 Suffragettes storm Parliament

On 13 February 1907, suffragettes stormed Westminster and raised their voices in protest. Sixty of those protestors were arrested and for 11 years, the suffragettes would fight on. Today those women and their tireless battle for equality are memorialised by this monument in Christchurch Gardens.



16. 1912 Chelsea Flower Show

The Chelsea Flower Show is the United Kingdom's annual celebration of flora. Every May, the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea come alive in a riot of colour and spectacular designs. It's truly a sight not to be missed and a springtime tradition.



THE BLITZ MEMORIAL

Positioned in front of St Paul's Cathedral, the Blitz Memorial is part of the London Firefighters Memorial, and celebrates the efforts of the city's fire crews during the bombing raids.

London under the Blitz

Following his failure in the Battle of Britain, Hitler turned his attention to Britain's cities, and London in particular

The possibility of large-scale bombing raids on London and other cities had been carefully considered in the years leading up to World War II. Small-scale attacks on London during the previous war had served notice of the city's vulnerability, and with military technology having improved greatly during the inter-war years, there was fear that attacks would be far more deadly.

Most worrying for the population of London was the fact that air defences could not hope to stop enemy planes from attacking. In the famous words of Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin in 1932: "the bomber will always get through." This, coupled with Winston Churchill's rather inelegant

prove to be a defining event in the history of London. At the same time, it was its darkest and its finest hour.

The period of calm following Britain's retreat from Dunkirk, the so-called 'phony war', created a peculiar mood in Britain. An invasion was expected at any moment, and only the gallant pilots of the Royal Air Force seemed capable of offering any resistance to the Nazi war machine.

London, measuring 117 square miles at the time, waited for the inevitable onslaught. It was more or less defenceless - there were only 264 anti-aircraft guns to protect the entire city, with most of the nation's guns being used to defend the RAF bases and factories.

"The orchestra continued to play
with the backing of an air-raid siren"

description of London as "a kind of tremendous fat cow tied up to attract the beasts of prey," created a mood of foreboding as war erupted on the continent and British troops were forced to evacuate from Dunkirk. Nobody doubted that attacks were coming, and nobody doubted they would be effective. London could not be moved to safety, and it was too big and valuable a target for the enemy to miss.

In the event, the bombing of London was both worse than expected and not as bad as feared. Estimates of 25,000 casualties a day proved to be overly dramatic, but at the same time, the raids were far more intense and lasted far longer than anybody had believed possible. The Blitz would

Small bombing raids on London and other cities (Plymouth in July 1940; Swindon, Birmingham and Portsmouth in August) gave ominous warning of what was to come, but the public became accustomed to the wail of air-raid sirens, and when the expected assaults repeatedly failed to materialise, they even became blasé. On the night of 24 August, at the Hammersmith Palais, the orchestra continued to play with the backing of an air-raid siren and only a handful of people left. On the night of 7 September, that all changed.

'Blitzkrieg' had already found its way into the world's vocabulary following the rapid subjugation of Poland and France. The 'Blitz', again drawing on the German word for lightning, was an entirely

Famous faces

Stricken areas were visited by politicians and royals during the Blitz, but they didn't always receive a warm welcome

Winston Churchill visited London's East End on 8 September to see for himself the extent of the damage. It was just the first of many visits by high-profile people, some of which served to boost morale (Major General Hastings Ismay cried when he accompanied Churchill on a visit, prompting onlookers to remark that he obviously cared about them), but others had the opposite effect (the king and queen were booed when they visited the East End on 17 September).



One of the more positive visits for the king and queen, on 18 October 1940

different approach to warfare, but the ferocity of the raids, and the level of fear they induced, made the name extremely apt.

Around tea-time on 7 September, the first massed bomber formation approached London. The docks were the primary target, but other areas, including Southwark, were hit. A total of 348 bombers, escorted by more than 600 fighter planes, took part. Hitler, despairing of breaking the Royal Air Force by direct attack, planned now to draw its fighters into futile efforts to defend the capital. The destruction of London's docks and the breaking of the city's morale was also key.

The intensity of the first major raid (the city had already been bombed lightly the day before) can

fitting analogy, as one fireman remarked: "The whole bloody world's on fire."

The twin raids of 7 September left hundreds dead and many more wounded. What was most shocking, however, was their duration. The second raid continued until 4.30am the next morning.

Planning for the raids, and construction of shelters, had not anticipated such long periods of bombing. Air raids were expected to be brief, so provision of sanitation, power and heating was not considered important. People were encouraged to use a sturdy room in their house, a basement ideally, as a shelter, or to purchase a build-it-yourself shelter for the back yard (provided free of charge to those on limited incomes).

"Although the all-clear siren finally sounded, sadly the respite was brief"

be gauged by the number of fire brigade call-outs logged during the attack. From 3pm until 3.59pm, there were none at all, then just six between 4pm and 4.59pm. The following hour there were 122 call-outs. The hour after, 308. Fire crews struggled to get to the scene of the devastation; one fireman commented that the swirling embers in the sky made him think of the eruption of Vesuvius that had destroyed Pompeii.

Although the all-clear siren finally sounded, sadly the respite was to be painfully brief. A second wave of bombers attacked after nightfall, using the fires set by the first wave as guides. A thousand pumps battled blazes at Surrey Docks as German planes dropped 625 tons of high explosives, along with around 800 incendiary bombs. The destruction of Pompeii seemed a

These Anderson shelters (named after Sir John Anderson, controller of Air Raid Precautions, but actually designed by William Paterson) were made of curved sheets of steel and designed to be half-buried in the ground of a back garden or other suitable area. Though cramped, they could hold six people, and offered decent protection if installed correctly, although they could do nothing against a direct hit.

Major buildings with strong basements were natural candidates for conversion into large communal shelters, but people also found themselves drawn to familiar sources of comfort. Churches, whether suitable or not, attracted many.

Some streamed out of the city as night approached, a phenomenon described by historian Juliet Gardiner as a "civilian Dunkirk," while others



The London docks burn after the first raid of the Blitz, on 7 September 1940

By the end of the Blitz, more than 2 million British civilians were homeless



A man stoops to closer examine the propulsion unit of a V rocket bomb



London under the Blitz



London's firemen worked tirelessly to battle the blazes caused by incendiary bombs

found safety in caves, such as the Chislehurst Caves in Kent. An estimated 15,000 people travelled there each night, and the caves became a hub of activity, with electricity laid on and social events organised. There was even a cinema.

The night of 7 September was just the first of 57 consecutive nights of bombing in London. Remarkably quickly, Londoners began to adapt to their new way of life - fairly ordinary days for those who hadn't been bombed out, followed by long, uncomfortable nights in shelters. What was difficult to come to terms with, in the early days of the Blitz, was the lack of a response from anti-aircraft gun crews.

More guns had been rushed in by the second night of the attacks, but for the most part they remained silent as the bomber formations droned overhead, unable to get a clear shot at their targets. Londoners felt puzzled and let down, not understanding why the guns remained silent. After a few days, deteriorating morale demanded a response, and General Sir Frederick Pile, in charge of anti-aircraft defences, instructed gun crews to simply fire in the general direction of the German planes, whether they could see them clearly or not. The result was ineffective in terms of hitting enemy planes, but massively effective in terms of boosting the public spirit. London was "baring its teeth," in the words of the *Daily Herald*.

Anti-aircraft guns gradually improved in effectiveness as the Blitz wore on. In September, an estimated 20,000 shells were required to down a single German bomber. By February of the following year, the figure had dipped below 3,000. The RAF, having fought the Luftwaffe to a standstill in the Battle of Britain, was less effective in countering the night-time bombing raids, with no really effective night fighter available.



Sheltering in tube stations was not always the pleasant experience as depicted in this cheery image

Going underground

Although discouraged by the authorities, London's Underground stations were a tempting place to find refuge from German bombs

What might have been considered obvious places to shelter - the deep stations of the London Underground - were not considered as such by the authorities in the early days of the Blitz. Solidly constructed, with electricity, they were theoretically ideal, but the government was keen for normal life to go on as much as possible, both for morale purposes and to stop the economy from grinding to a halt. The Underground was therefore to continue as normal.

Despite this, tube stations were used by frightened Londoners from the very first night of the Blitz, and such use was reluctantly sanctioned by the government after a week of bombing. In reality, there was little alternative but to accept their use - setting up troops outside each station entrance to turn away frightened

civilians would have been a PR disaster. There was a fear that people who went down into the safety of the tube stations might not be willing to come back up when a raid was over, but would instead adopt a troglodyte lifestyle underground. Such 'trogs' never materialised, and those sheltering in the stations referred to themselves by the less distasteful name of 'tubeites'.

Their numbers were small in relation to the population of London - only around 180,000 found refuge there during peak usage. The stations were also far from invulnerable, as various tragedies, including the deaths of 68 at Balham High Road in October 1940, demonstrated, but the image of hordes of Londoners sheltering in the tube stations became one of the enduring stories of the Blitz.

Book of London

With air defences offering only spotty performance, London seemed to be at the mercy of Hitler's planes, but a change of emphasis, with ports becoming the main focus of raids, brought relief. The weather also played its part – on one night, the weather was too poor for raids, and London enjoyed its first peaceful night since the start of the Blitz.

The punishment was far from over, however. A full moon on 15 November saw the bombers back in force and, following an unofficial three-day 'truce' over Christmas, 29 December saw the heaviest raid of the entire Blitz. Another full moon, now known grimly as a 'bomber's moon', coincided with a low tide in the Thames, which made fighting the ensuing fires all the more difficult. The result was the 'Second Great Fire of London', with more than 1,400 fires started, many of which merged into 'conflagrations'. Eight of the churches built by Sir Christopher Wren after the first Great Fire were destroyed, but St Paul's, though threatened by flames on all sides, survived. A photograph of the great dome, taken by press photographer Herbert Mason and showing the cathedral's dome shining through rolling clouds of smoke, became a symbol of London's defiance. 'Britain can take it' had been abandoned as a propaganda slogan by that time, but London was proving that it could take a fearful hammering and still go on.

By the end of May 1941, there were 2.25 million homeless people in Britain as a result of German bombing raids, with the great majority in London. The Blitz, however, was petering out. There had been four major raids (those unleashing at least 100 tons of bombs) in January, but bad weather had again intervened in February. March had seen the return of major attacks, but on 10 May the last official raid of the Blitz took place. It was one of the most destructive, with 1,436 killed, but Hitler was turning his attention east, towards Russia.

Around 43,000 civilians had been killed throughout the British Isles during the course of the Blitz, with around 17,500 Londoners dying. It was a far cry from the 25,000 casualties per day anticipated before the war, and the authorities had also been braced for many more psychiatric casualties as the bombing progressed, a nightmarish prospect that thankfully never managed to materialise.

Nobody in the bombed-out districts of London, or in the other British cities to be attacked, felt that they had got off lightly, though. Only 600 or so German bombers had been lost during the raids, and Germany could probably have maintained the savage intensity of the attacks for many more months had focus not switched to Russia.

As is often the case, the end of the Blitz was only visible in retrospect. For the civilian population, there was a slow dawning of realisation that the worst had passed. London had taken it, but the war was far from over.

4 Night raids

Although German planes target other British cities, including Coventry, Manchester and Liverpool, the focus remains on London. A full moon on 15 November provides assistance for the biggest bombing raid of the month. Famous buildings, including the National Portrait Gallery, are hit.

London during the Blitz

Following its failure in the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe turned its attention to Britain's cities

7 The last raid

The final major raid of the Blitz is a deadly one, with nearly 1,500 people losing their lives, and an estimated 11,000 houses destroyed. Landmarks including the Houses of Parliament are damaged, but London has survived with its spirit undiminished.

3 Luftwaffe losses mount

As the campaign continues, Luftwaffe losses (mostly due to the RAF, as anti-aircraft fire is largely ineffective) and bad weather force the Germans to decrease the number of daytime raids from early October onwards.

6 Germany rethinks

German commanders become convinced that British morale will not be destroyed by the bombing of its cities. Emphasis shifts to maritime targets, including coastal ports, in an effort to cripple Britain's war economy, although raiding over London continues.

5 St Paul's survives

The biggest raid of the Blitz comes just after Christmas. The 'Second Great Fire of London' is the result, with around 1,500 fires started. Many historic buildings, including 19 churches, are destroyed, but the survival of St Paul's Cathedral is heralded as a symbol of British resistance.

8 The final toll

After 71 major raids, Hitler shifts his attention to the imminent invasion of Russia, although London will continue to be bombed for the remainder of the war, including by V1 'doodlebug' rockets. More than 28,000 Londoners have been killed and much of the Docklands area has been devastated, but the sustained attacks are mercifully over.

1 The first raid

Sporadic bombing has taken place before, and throughout 7 September German bombers arrive in small numbers, but around 5pm the first massed bombing raid takes place, with the docks and Southwark hit particularly hard. The Blitz has begun and London will be hit on 57 consecutive nights.

2 Finding shelter

The vast majority of Londoners shelter at home or in small communal shelters, but a small proportion take refuge in London Underground stations (including the disused Aldwych Tube Station), which are opened to the public after the first week of bombing.

UNDERGROUND

The Great Smog of London

Smog was a regular occurrence in the capital, but the smog of 1952 was the worst the city had ever seen

Smog was common in parts of London; in fact it was considered a part of city life. Thick fog would mix with chimney smoke to create smog, and this would appear in the capital a number of times throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, commonly in the East End where there was a concentration of factories.

In early December 1952, British winter weather and lack of wind combined with airborne pollutants to create a thick layer of smoky fog

over London that changed people's opinions on the pollution. These coloured clouds caused illness, damaged buildings, and left dirt and dust on people's clothes, but the Great Smog of 1952 would do it on a level not seen before.

The winter of 1952 was harsh, with cold winds and heavy snow forcing people to use large amounts of coal to keep themselves warm, releasing smoke all across the capital. Most homes in the city used cheap coals that contained higher

The Great Smog of London



The smog was so thick that throughout the four days people couldn't see across the street

amounts of sulphur. As well as homes, vehicles and power stations all over the city were also producing large amounts of smoke. The cold winds then stopped as an anticyclone began to hover over London, this pushed air downwards. The smoke that would normally leave chimneys and then rise and dissipate was being pushed back down and there was no wind to help

disperse it. This also meant the harmful sulphur dioxide contained in the soot was staying down in the capital's streets.

Between 5 and 9 December 1952, London was covered in a cloud of greenish/yellow fog known as a 'pea-souper'. It appeared almost out of nowhere and on some days it would be so thick that people claimed they couldn't see their feet or their hand stretched out in front of them. Parents were told not to send their children to school due to the risk of them getting lost on the way. The smog also reached inside some buildings. It was reported that some theatres and cinemas had to cancel shows, as people couldn't make out what was happening on the stage or screen.

Due to the cold weather roads were icy, this mixed with the fog meant that people had to walk slowly ahead of cars, guiding the driver with torches. This also included fire engines and ambulances. After a while traffic on the roads came to a standstill, planes had to be diverted and train services were delayed. The only means of getting around London was via the Underground or by walking.

At first, the people of London didn't panic as this was seen as normal, but days afterwards reports started to come in of the number of people affected by the smog. It was reported that by 9

December approximately 4,000 people had died as a result of the smog but many more could have passed away from illness afterwards. Later reports would estimate it to be around 12,000 deaths, this included people who died in the weeks that followed as a result of the fog. Most of the people who died were elderly, adolescent or suffering from respiratory problems before the fog emerged.

However, the Great Smog was important in terms of the government's view on environmental health, as in 1956 the Clean Air Act was introduced. This aimed to reduce air pollution by introducing set 'smoke control areas' where only fuels that didn't produce smoke could be used. The government had originally been dismissive of the problem, as smog was something that had occurred on multiple occasions before. But due to the number of people who had died during the Great Smog and thanks to pressure from committees, MPs pushed for tougher action to help tackle the problem.



When completed, Battersea Power Station was the third-largest generator in Britain

Battersea Power Station

Today it is seen as an iconic structure, but it was one of the biggest contributors to the smog

Perhaps the most famous coal-fired power station in the world, Battersea Power Station contributed significantly to the Great Smog. At the time of the disaster, only half of the structure was operational; the other half was near completion, but it was still burning a large amount of coal. The construction of Battersea was originally protested due to the size of the project and fear of it being an eyesore. However, due to its iconic look and appearance in films and on TV, it has become one of London's most well-known structures. To put the public's mind at rest, the exterior of the building was designed by famous architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, who also designed the red telephone box and Liverpool Cathedral.

The power station was built in two stages: A Station opened and started generating power in 1933, while construction of the second half didn't begin until after World War II. B Station eventually became active in 1953. Battersea was built in the centre of London on the bank of the River Thames so it could be close to water for cooling and delivery of coal was simpler. Today, the power station is under development. It ceased operation in 1983 and is currently being converted into offices, apartments and retail space, with its structure left intact.



A tugboat moored on the River Thames during the Great Smog



The 7/7 London terrorist bombings

On the morning of 7 July 2005, radical Islamic terrorists struck London's public transportation system with multiple suicide bombings

Although the threat of terrorist violence had been present for some time, and Londoners were no strangers to such peril from varied quarters through the years, the morning of 7 July 2005 was shattered by a coordinated attack. Multiple bombs were detonated by Islamic extremists - 52 people were killed and nearly 800 others were injured. The incidents of that day are most often remembered with the stark designation of '7/7'.

Lashing out against the continuing support of the United Kingdom for operations against Islamic militants in Iraq and Afghanistan, four terrorists donned backpacks containing explosives of an organic peroxide concoction, and set off on a synchronised wave of terror. Mohammad Sidique Khan, aged 30; Shehzad Tanweer, aged 22; and Hasib Hussain, aged 18

were the British-born sons of Pakistani immigrants, while the fourth 7/7 bomber, 19-year-old Germaine Lindsay (also known as Abdullah Shaheed Jamal) was Jamaican born.

Early on the morning of 7 July, three bombs were set off within 50 seconds of one another. Tanweer detonated the first at 8.49am aboard London Underground train number 204, which had departed King's Cross St Pancras station minutes earlier and was travelling eastbound between Liverpool Street and Aldgate. Seven people died. Almost simultaneously, Khan's backpack exploded, killing six aboard Underground train 216, which had just left platform 4 at Edgware Road station, travelling west towards Paddington. Lindsay blew himself up, killing 26 aboard Underground train 311, southbound from King's Cross St Pancras to Russell Square station.

THE SOMBRE 7/7 BOMBING MEMORIAL

The 7 July Memorial in London's Hyde Park includes 52 stainless steel columns commemorating the innocent lives lost during terrorist bombings of the Underground and a double-decker bus on 7 July 2005.

In the ensuing chaos, smoke poured from tunnels, and choking passengers were brought to street level as rapidly as possible. Initial reports indicated that up to six bombs had exploded, but that confusion was due to survivors exiting at multiple points since the incidents occurred while trains were between stations. The Tanweer and Khan bombings occurred on the wide Circle Line, and some of their explosive force vented through the tunnels. Lindsay's bomb, however, was detonated on the deeper Piccadilly Line, resulting in greater casualties.

As the city of London responded to the Underground bombs and all train services were suspended, Hussain boarded a double-decker bus on route 30 between Marble Arch and Hackney Wick. At 9.35am, the bus pulled in to Euston station, where a crowd waited to board. Minutes later, it proceeded towards Tavistock Square. As it reached the vicinity of the British Medical Association headquarters at 9.47am, Hussain's bomb ripped the roof off the vehicle, heavily damaging its rear. Thirteen people died, and eyewitnesses reported seeing half the bus flying through the air.



Two weeks after the 7/7 tragedy, another attempted round of terror attacks in London was thwarted. During the subsequent investigation into the 7/7 bombings, three men were arrested, two of them at the airport in Manchester as they attempted to board a flight to Pakistan, and the third at a house in Leeds, and charged with suspicion of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism under the Terrorism Act of 2000. Eventually two of them were convicted of conspiracy during the conduct of reconnaissance missions prior to the bombings and sentenced to seven years in prison.

In 2011, a coroner's report cleared London's emergency services of accusations that the response to 7/7 had been too slow. A judge ruled that the severity of many victims' injuries would have resulted in their deaths regardless. A year later, documents were made public that officially linked the 7/7 bombings to Al-Qaeda, indicating that the attacks were planned by operative Rashid Rauf and led by Mohammad Sidique Khan.



The IRA bombing campaign

Intent on compelling the British to withdraw from Ireland, the IRA declared war and initiated a persistent wave of terror bombing.

While major war clouds gathered in Europe in 1939, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was busy preparing a war of its own against Great Britain. Following a shake-up within its ranks, IRA leaders Seán Russell and Seamus O'Donovan advanced the S-Plan, or England Campaign, a coordinated effort to bomb and sabotage Great Britain into withdrawing from Ireland so that an Irish republic could be established. On 12 January, the IRA, acting as it believed a sovereign nation would, issued a proclamation of intent to go to war with Britain if certain conditions were not met.

The British government remained silent, refusing to give in to the ultimatum, and for over a year a wave of IRA bombings targeted civilian and military infrastructure in Britain, killing ten people and injuring 96. The terrorist activity spread to cities throughout Britain, however London was the focus of the unsettling campaign. During the first month of the S-Plan's execution, three bombs exploded in the capital city, damaging a large power station and overhead cables along the Grand Union Canal and ruptured gas mains near Williams Deacons Bank. In the same month, seven individuals were arrested in London, and another seven were taken into custody in Manchester. Two explosions rocked the London Underground at Leicester Square and Tottenham Court Road stations in February.

Arrests, deportations and trials of accused IRA conspirators increased across Britain, and on 24 June, a pair of tremendous blasts did significant damage to London branches of Lloyds Bank, Midland Bank and Westminster Bank. A series of raids on Irish communities in Britain followed. Fittingly, the last bombing under the abortive S-Plan occurred in a London garbage dump on 18 March 1940. There were no injuries, and the bombing took place more than six months after Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, igniting World War II. Decades later during the 1970s, the Provisional IRA claimed responsibility for numerous bombings in London, many of them utilising automobiles.

Iranian Embassy in London under siege

In 1980, Arab extremists occupied the Iranian embassy in London, taking 26 people hostage

On 30 April 1980, six armed extremists took control of the Iranian embassy in London, demanding the release of political prisoners and safe passage from the United Kingdom. The terrorists were advocates for independent Arab rule in Khuzestan Province in southern Iran. They took 26 hostages, including staff members, visitors and one London policeman. When the government of prime minister Margaret Thatcher declined to grant safe passage, negotiations stretched for several days. Five hostages were released in exchange for granting a few of the extremists' minor demands. However, they grew restless as the days dragged on.

On 5 May, the captors executed one of the hostages and tossed his body out of the embassy. The murder quickly became a catalyst for action. The government granted permission for elite Special Air Service (SAS) troops to execute Operation Nimrod and free the hostages. The highly trained soldiers rappelled from the embassy's roof, shattering windows on entry, and the lightning-swift raid was over in 17 minutes. One hostage and five terrorists were killed during the raid. An inquest conducted after the operation cleared the SAS personnel of wrongdoing in the deaths of two extremists, and the service was rapidly inundated with applications after details of the action were released.



Damage to the Iranian embassy in London is evident following the siege that occurred in 1980

2012 Summer Olympics

The Games of the XXX Olympiad brought many changes to the city in the hope of inspiring a new generation of athletes

Britain was no stranger to bidding for the rights to host the Olympic Games. The British Olympic Association (BOA) had bid for the 1992 Olympic Games to be held in Birmingham and twice in Manchester for 1996 and 2000. However, following these unsuccessful attempts, the BOA decided that London would be the only UK city that had a chance of being considered for the Games, and so it bid to host the 2012 Olympics.

In 2003, nine cities submitted their bids to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). After each city completed the IOC's questionnaire to determine its capacity to host the Games, the number of applicants was shortened to just five: London, Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris. At the time, Paris was considered the favourite as it had scored highly in its evaluation and came close on previous attempts. When the top five were decided, each city was visited by the IOC Evaluation Commission for a four-day inspection. The final step was a ballot by IOC members. On 6 July 2005, the International Olympic Committee announced London would be the host of the 2012

Olympic Games, winning the ballot with 54 votes to Paris's 50. Today it is considered one of the most hotly contested bidding processes for the Olympic Games in history. This announcement made London the first city to host three Olympic Games; the last time England's capital hosted the Games was in 1948.

One of the key points in London's bid was its goal to develop venues that would continue to be used after the Games were over and plans to improve the city's infrastructure. This would be done using numerous existing venues around the city, while any new ones would be used for entertainment or other sporting events after the Games. Venues such as the Olympic Hockey Centre, for example, would be used as a facility for hockey players to train, preparing them for future competitions.

Supporters for the bid gathered to watch the announcement in Trafalgar Square as well as in Stratford, where the new Olympic Park would be built. Celebrations were cut short, however, because the following day Britain suffered one of its worst terrorist attacks when London was hit by





ARCELORMITTAL ORBIT

The tower built in the Olympic Park as a sign of the Games' legacy has two viewing platforms. You can also see the park while riding the world's longest tunnel slide, which goes around the tower.



Book of London

a series of bombs, injuring more than 700 people and killing 52.

The Olympic torch was lit on 10 May during a ceremony in Olympia, Greece. It was taken across the country for eight days before being flown over to the UK to begin the British relay. Carried by a total of 8,000 torchbearers over two months, the relay's route was designed so that 95 per cent of the British population were at most an hour away from the torch. It also passed through the capital's most famous monuments before reaching the Olympic Stadium for the opening ceremony. The London 2012 Olympic Games were officially held from 27 July to 12 August, although the first event took place on 25 July as the preliminary rounds of women's football were played on that day.

At the 2012 Olympic Games, 32 world records were set across eight sports. China, Great Britain and the United States set the most, each with five. Over the course of the Games, 204 nations took part with over 10,700 competitors participating. 85 nations won at least one medal; for seven of the countries it was their first time winning one at the Olympics. Team GB had its most successful Olympic Games in over a century, winning 65 medals - 29 gold, 17 silver and 19 bronze. The United States won the most medals, totalling 103 with 46 of them gold. Michael Phelps became the most-decorated Olympic athlete when he won six medals, taking his career total to 22. 302 events were held across 26 sports, including women's boxing - which was introduced at the London

Games - and mixed doubles tennis, which was re-introduced for the first time since 1924.

In preparation for the Games, the athletes and the millions of people who would come to see them, London had to transform a large part of the city's east side. The Olympic Park was built on four different boroughs in the east of London, and it took around 80,000 workers to complete the project. The site where the Park was built was vacant land, previously used by industrial buildings and, before work began, it was occupied by a lot of waste. The site was given the postcode of E20 by the Royal Mail, which was previously only used in the soap opera *EastEnders*.

When completed, the Olympic Park housed the London Aquatics Centre, which was used for the swimming and diving events, and the Lee Valley VeloPark, home to the velodrome and BMX track. The Park also housed the Olympic Village, 3,300 apartments used by athletes and officials throughout the Games. These were later adapted into houses for rent or sale with over 1,000 of them classed as 'affordable'. After the Games, the Park was renamed the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Overlooking the Olympic Stadium and its Park was the ArcelorMittal Orbit. Completed in May 2012, it is the largest piece of public art in Britain.

During the Olympic Committee's inspection of London during the bidding process, one of the



The Emirates Air Line was built to provide quicker access between Olympic venues



With its oval shape, the Olympic Stadium is able to host sports such as cricket and football

"Team GB had its most successful Games in over a century, winning 65 medals"



The Olympic Park stands as a symbol of the 2012 London Olympics legacy



London's opening ceremony

The opening ceremony is one of the most important aspects of the Games. It sets the scene for the events to come and showcases the host country to millions of viewers around the world. Beijing, the host in 2008, had raised expectations with an opening ceremony full of large, extravagant performances, giving Britain a lot to live up to in 2012. Film director Danny Boyle was chosen to direct London's opening ceremony, which lasted just under four hours.

London's ceremony was titled 'Isles of Wonder' and it was a love-letter to all things British. It celebrated the country's history, traditions and pop culture. Icons such as The Beatles, James Bond and even Queen Elizabeth II made an appearance. As a sign of the new generation of athletes leading the way, the last seven torchbearers were all young athletes, and had been chosen by the country's past Olympic heroes to ignite the cauldron. The ceremony was praised around the world for its creativity, and it won several awards, including a BAFTA. Worldwide, around 900 million people are estimated to have watched it, with roughly half of the population of the UK, making it one of the most watched events on British television.



The opening ceremony took audiences through Britain's history, from Stonehenge to the modern day

key points the city had to improve was its public transport. London's transport infrastructure was overhauled with the aim being that over 90 per cent of athletes would be able to reach their event within half an hour. Many roads around London were marked with Olympic rings that were reserved for Olympic officials and athletes, and an extra 4,000 train services were in use each day.

Over £9 billion were spent on preparing London for the 2012 Games, and the Olympic legacy remains. The goal was to develop long-lasting benefits for the country by increasing sporting facilities, encouraging young people to take part in sport, increasing tourism and improving East London through new homes, venues and transport links. Today, all eight of the permanent Olympic venues are still in use, with the Olympic Stadium now home to West Ham United Football Club. In 2013, one of the buildings used for managing Olympic teams was converted into Chobham Academy, a campus for students aged three to 19. Today, more homes are being built in East Village, and the hope is that once complete the area will become a thriving residential area.



The Olympic rings could be found all around London, even on the city's historical sites



1. 1948 First black cab

In 1948 the Austin FX3 became the recognised black taxicab on the streets of London. Before this there had been no standardised car used, but now travellers and locals could easily pick out and hail a taxi. The tradition of the black cab continues to this day.



2. 1954 The Cutty Sark

Step aboard the Cutty Sark and travel back in time. Built in 1869, this tea clipper offers a unique opportunity to find out what life was like for the Victorian sailor. Raised above the ground, you can even walk beneath her to truly appreciate this feat of nautical engineering.



3. 1959 Ronnie Scott's

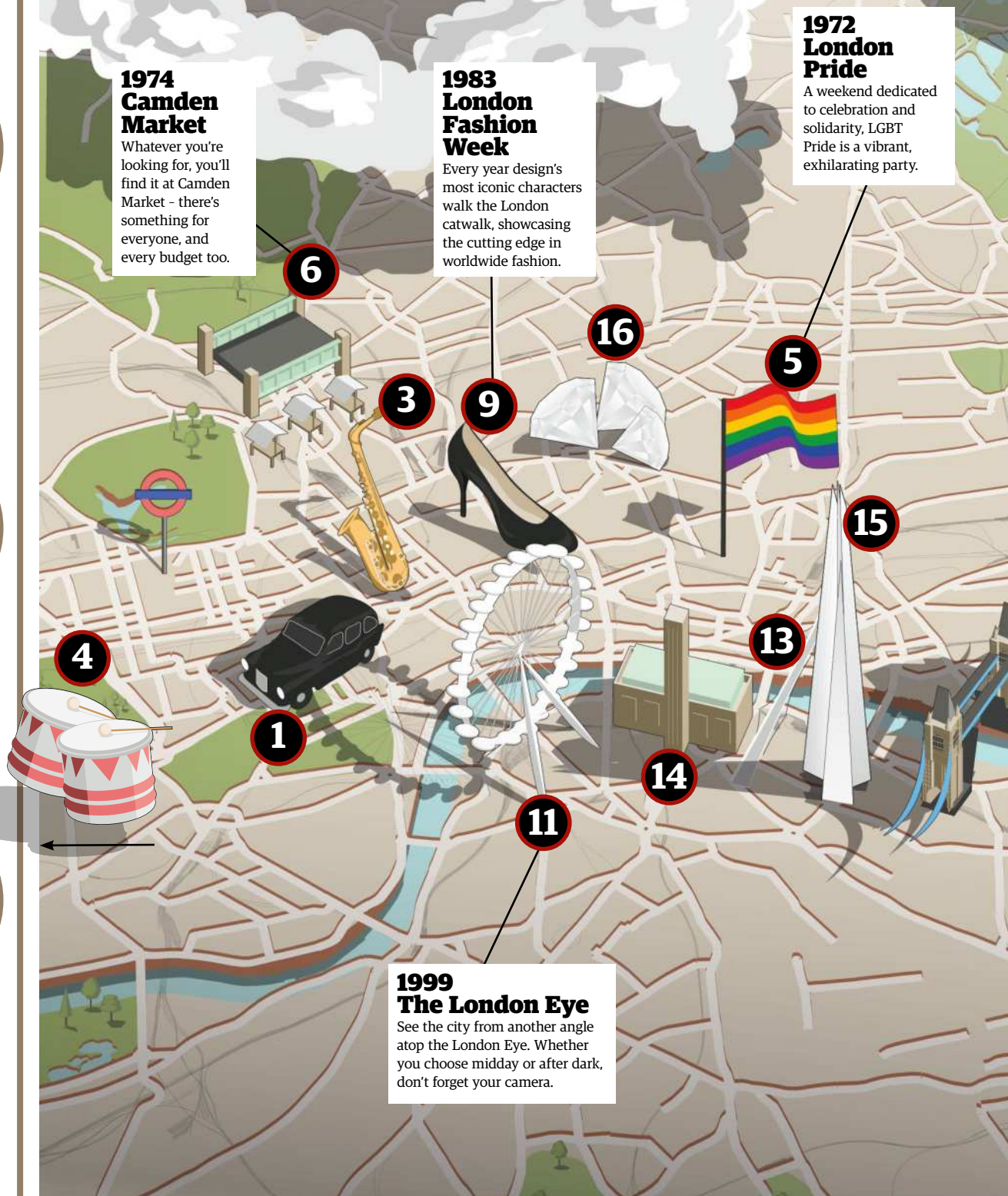
For nearly six decades, Ronnie Scott's has been the home of London jazz. This evocative club has hosted musicians as diverse as Ella Fitzgerald, Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck. No matter who's on the bill you can be sure of a great night out in one of jazz's most iconic venues.



4. 1966 Notting Hill Carnival

Every year since 1966, Londoners have gathered in Notting Hill for a two-day party. This exciting carnival regularly attracts in excess of 1 million spectators and is curated by the London West Indian community. It's a noisy, colourful, thrilling celebration of life and heritage.

London 1940 to present day



1974 Camden Market

Whatever you're looking for, you'll find it at Camden Market - there's something for everyone, and every budget too.

1983 London Fashion Week

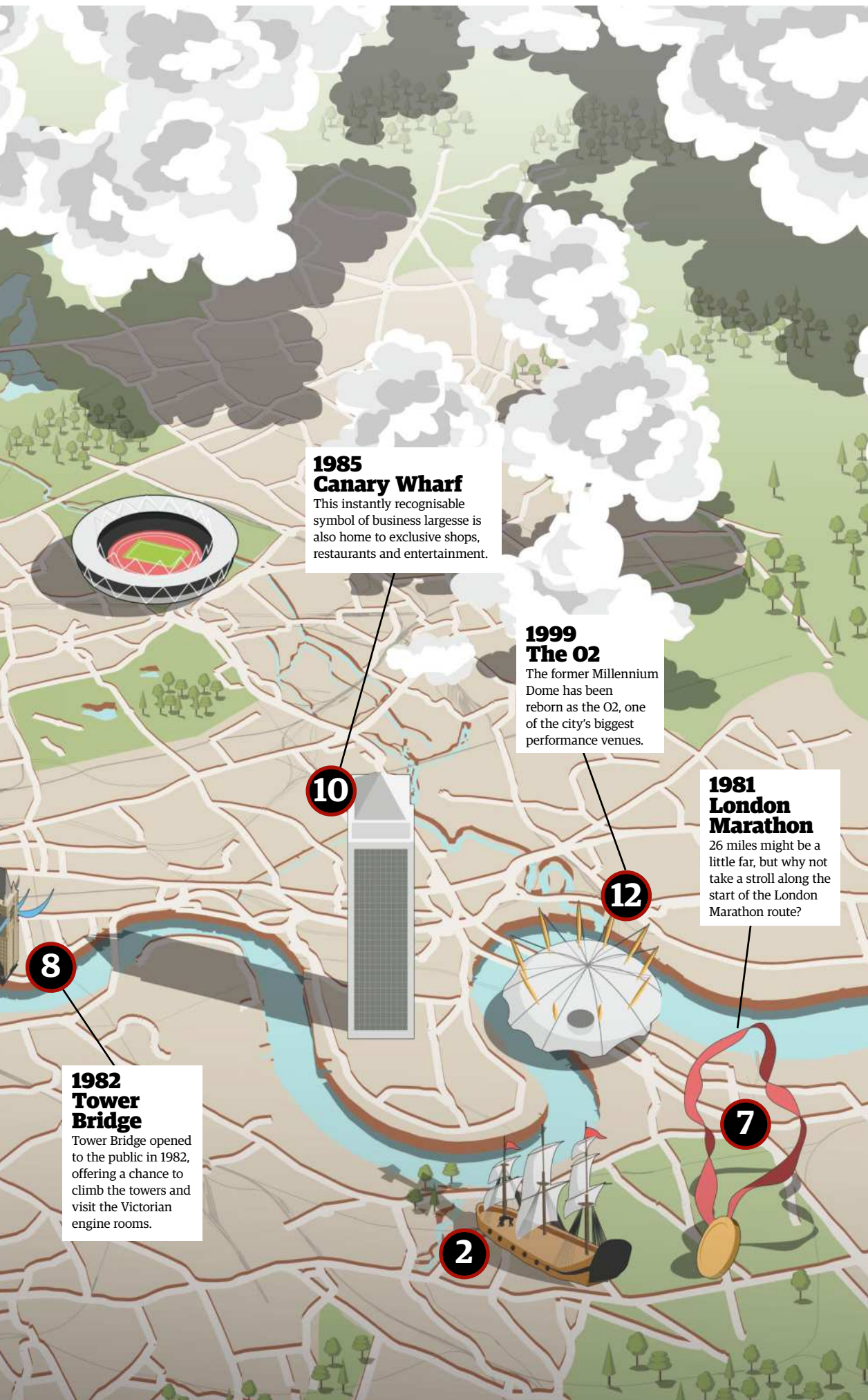
Every year design's most iconic characters walk the London catwalk, showcasing the cutting edge in worldwide fashion.

1972 London Pride

A weekend dedicated to celebration and solidarity, LGBT Pride is a vibrant, exhilarating party.

1999 The London Eye

See the city from another angle atop the London Eye. Whether you choose midday or after dark, don't forget your camera.



1985 Canary Wharf

This instantly recognisable symbol of business largesse is also home to exclusive shops, restaurants and entertainment.

1999 The O2

The former Millennium Dome has been reborn as the O2, one of the city's biggest performance venues.

1981 London Marathon

26 miles might be a little far, but why not take a stroll along the start of the London Marathon route?

1982 Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge opened to the public in 1982, offering a chance to climb the towers and visit the Victorian engine rooms.



13. 2000 Millennium Bridge

Linking Bankside with the City of London, this pedestrian suspension bridge offers stunning views of London and the Thames - thankfully, it no longer wobbles. Its southern end is near the Globe theatre and Tate Modern, while its northern end is close to St Paul's Cathedral.



14. 2000 Tate Modern

From the immense, awe-inspiring Turbine Hall to the ever-changing, often-iconic guest exhibitions, the Tate Modern showcases the very best in contemporary art. So far the Tate Modern has hosted Hirst, Emin, Matisse and more, and the architecture is as impressive as the art.



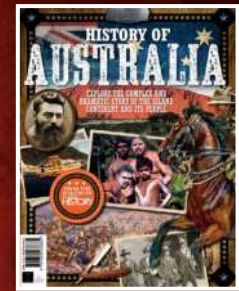
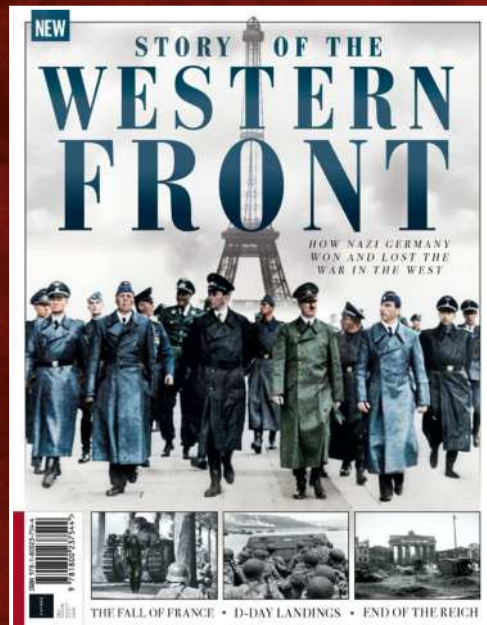
15. 2013 The Shard

Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore The Shard, and even Doctor Who has paid it a visit. Opening four years after construction began in 2009, it is the tallest building in the United Kingdom and offers unparalleled views across the city.



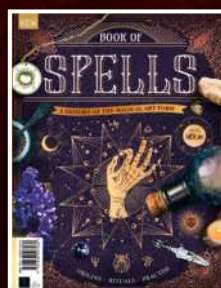
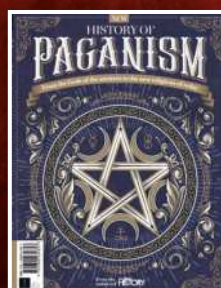
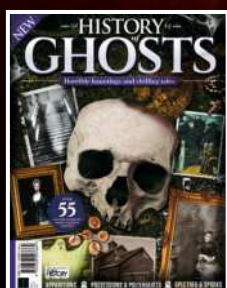
16. 2015 Hatton Garden Robbery

The Hatton Garden Heist was the biggest robbery in the country's history. With over £20 million worth of gems stolen from a safety deposit box in the heart of London's jewellery quarter, this audacious robbery seized the headlines for months.



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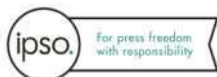
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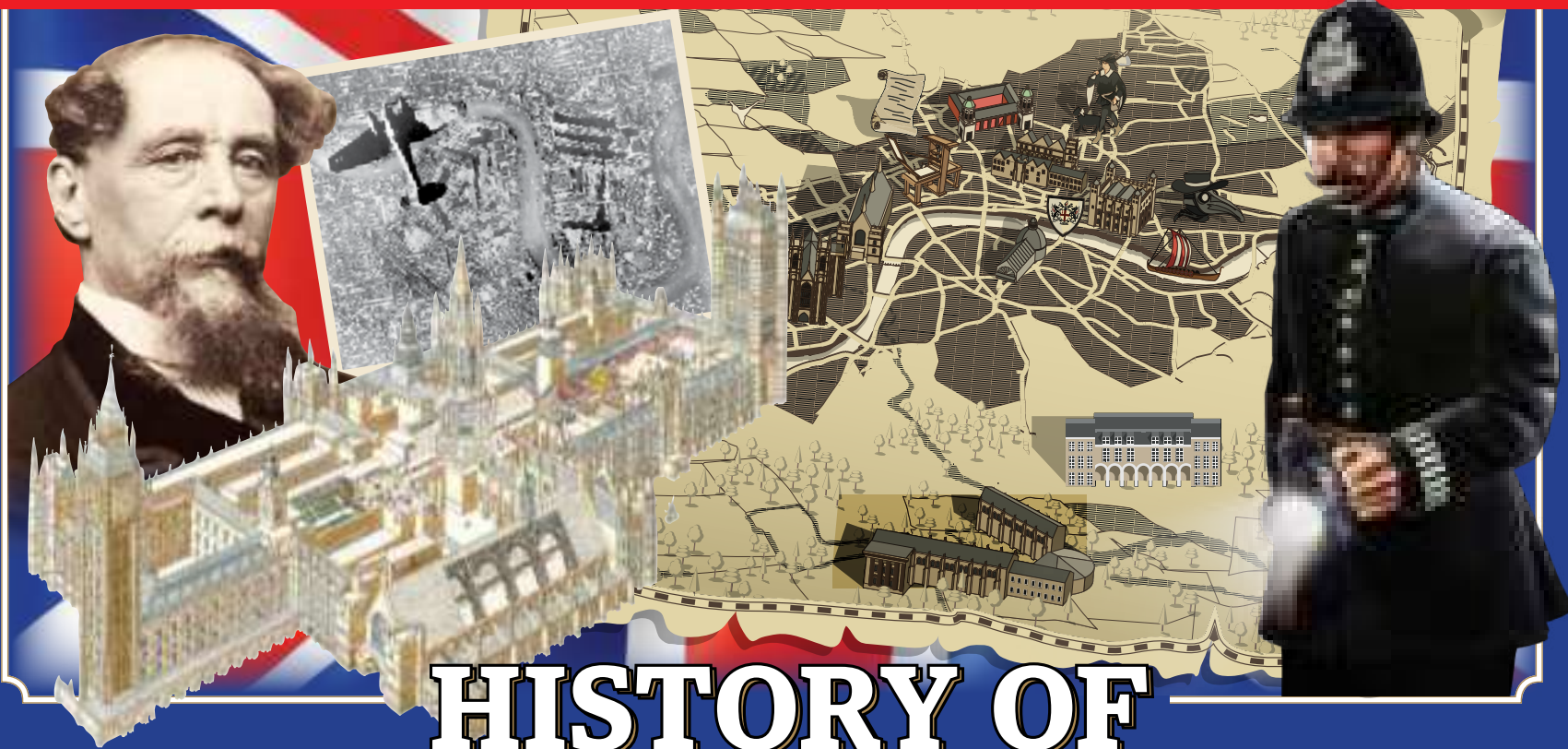
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